

EXTRACT OF POPPIES.

INTRODUCTION.

[THE "Robert" to whom this journal is addressed, have been asked to add a few explanatory sentences. I was the cousin of the writer, and his most intimate friend. He was an orphan brought up in my father's house; and as we were nearly of an age, and I was an only son, we were like brothers. Yet we had very little in common: I was a worldling—he, a mystic. When we grew up, I settled in Liverpool, and became absorbed in active business; while he isolated himself very much from his fellow-creatures, caring only for the society of books. He early devoted himself to deep studies, his researches finally becoming principally directed towards magic, and the barren lore of the Rosicrucians, about which he would talk with passionate eagerness on the occasions when he stayed with me. The only modern subject in which he appeared to take any interest was spiritualism, my scepticism concerning which he certainly shook for a time. I fear, however, that in this and other cognate subjects, I professed to be a better believer than I really was; for when questions of no earthly practical importance are discussed, I like to give my common sense a holiday, and allow imagination to take its swing. On the occasion of my cousin's last visit, however, I was concerned to notice a degree of mental excitement which was new to him, and I discovered that he had contracted an unfortunate habit which was undermining his constitution. Opium, taken in the first instance as a medicine, had become necessary to him. When he left me, I persuaded him to see a London physician in whom I had every reason to place great confidence, and I extracted a promise that he would write and let me know how he was going on. He did not keep that promise exactly, though the journal, which extends over a space of four months, shows that he intended to do so; and I confess that for some time his existence faded out of my memory, so utterly absorbed was I by business at a period of crises, when I was vacillating between ruin and fortune.

This is the Journal.

"London.

"MY DEAR ROBERT—I retract my promise to write letters to you after the ordinary fashion of correspondence; it is such an effort to me to look back for days and weeks, and recall sufficient to make up four respectable sides of a sheet of paper. And when my day's work is done, I want repose. But I will keep a diary if you like, for I find it no labour, but on the contrary a relief, a rest, to write down what I have been doing and planning but a few hours before. That is no strain upon the memory, but refreshes me, like a quiet chat. So that I have been in the habit for some years of keeping memoranda in a pocket-book. This journal I will send you from time to time.

"I went to Doctor Tate yesterday, as you wished, and he told me pretty much what you would have said, or what I could have told myself. I paid him for the information that I am overworked, and that opium is an unwholesome drug. His advice was to go out of town; to vegetate for some months in perfect idleness, and gradually to reduce my doses. Well, when I am able to knock off work, I will also try to exist without opium, in spite of the horrors in store for me, according to De Quincey; though, as I have never taken it to anything like the extent he did, I hope to come off easier. But when shall I be able to take a



complete holiday? I have, indeed, at last collected all my materials: my notes would fill five quarto volumes, and I had to master four new languages and seven dialects in the research. But to digest this mass, to arrange it all in a consecutive, intelligible form, will require much labour, time, and skill. With my failing health, I may not accomplish it myself, but I hope to advance far enough for others to take up the work where I have dropped it; for though I trust to assist somewhat, after that change which we call death, it is impossible, in the present defective state of spiritual communication, to put much confidence in the amount of influence I shall be able to exert. Ah, my book, when published, will do more to establish—or may we not rather say, to restore?—that communication than any European work ever penned. What a loss to humanity, what an eternal disappointment to myself, were it never to see the light! I dreaded that calamity two years ago, when my memory and power of clear thought failed me so suddenly and terribly. It was in despair that I tried the remedy of opium, for I had a horror of the drug. But how magical were its effects! My nerves lost that gnawing restlessness which had distressed me so sorely; my mind regained its former powers—nay, it acquired a fresh vigour. It is a better physician than you, Doctor Tate; and if I have to pay it a higher fee, that is only fair.

"I will follow the good doctor's advice in one respect, however—that of going out of town. The complete state my notes are in enables me to do this comfortably. I am at last independent of books and libraries, and can work, like the silkworm, without external aid. And glad am I to escape from the perpetual din and roar and hum which are tearing my nerves to pieces. I settled at once where to go to. In passing through Bala, in Wales, by coach, some years ago, I took a great fancy to the pretty little place, and shall start for it to-morrow."

"Waiting-room, Railway Junction.

"I wish I could get some man of real genius to write the first chapter of my work, and impress people with a sense of its seriousness. If they would but give it fair attention in the first instance, I do not doubt of its effect. But the age is so impregnated with materialism, that any one who speaks with gravity of matters outside

the routine of everyday experience is looked upon, without inquiry, as an impostor or a madman. I suppose that there are hardly twenty people in England who would credit the existence of those demi-demons called ghouls and vampires, for example; and yet the mass of evidence which I have accumulated from the records of all countries in all ages, during the last two years that I have devoted to that branch of my subject, would convince any one who weighed it carefully and impartially. If all those well-attested cases are myths, there is no dependence to be placed on human testimony whatever: Julius Cæsar was a myth; Louis XIV. was a myth; the French Revolution was a sensational story got up by a literary clique for book-making purposes."

"Bala.

"Doctor Tate suspected aphasia. I am sure of it, from his questions; but there is no loss of memory. This place is exactly as I expected to see it: mountains, lake, streams, and even the houses of the village, were impressed with such marvellous accuracy on my brain. Yet I only remained here the time to change horses, and that many years ago. Why this strong impression? When I came within sight of Bala yesterday, the same feeling came over me which I remember to have experienced on the first occasion. I was stirred as a returning Swiss emigrant is on visiting the valley where he spent his childhood; or as the man is who has loved and lost, when he stands once again in the old trysting-place. Can it be that my destiny is in some way bound up with this Welsh village? Shall I take it as a happy omen that my work will be brought to a successful conclusion here? Or is it my evil angel, and not my good, who draws me to the spot where I am to meet my fate?"

"To remain at the inn more than one night was out of the question in the state of my nerves. I had no difficulty in getting a lodging which suited me: a cottage, thatched-roofed, the walls overgrown with jessamine, honeysuckle, and roses to such an extent that the casements have to be constantly cleared with the pruning-knife; in short, the house has its hair cut periodically. It stands in a small garden, about half a mile from the little town, and the front windows command a pretty view of the lake. My landlady is old and very

deaf, but not past her work, in which she is assisted by another woman, also elderly, and very stupid-looking. She may be a daughter, or a younger sister, or merely a servant; I cannot say. They do what is necessary, without fuss; never want to chat; never come near me unless I send for them; and seem to understand that it is quite a matter of course that they are never to touch my papers, though the dust lie an inch thick upon them. I believe that they have escaped the female mania for dusting. We three and a fine tom cat are the sole inhabitants of the house. The tom cat is friendly: he admires my habits. You know that I never have any regular meals, and make no distinction between day and night. I think he considers all this feline and sensible. His mistress takes everything as a matter of course.

"I wonder where they got their furniture. It is very old, and some of it of very considerable value, to be in the possession of a woman who lets her house and lives in the kitchen: high-backed ebony chairs, an oak table, a cabinet—all so wonderfully carved as to be more fitted for the Cluny Museum at Paris than a Welsh cottage. The upper part of the cabinet consists of folding doors. I shall try them; and if they are unfastened and the cabinet is empty, I shall keep the bulk of my MSS. there. A fitting receptacle, considering the character of my researches. The piece of furniture is seven hundred years old at least, and may probably have belonged to one of those philosophers of the Middle Ages whose discoveries were lost to mankind—lost, stifled by an ambitious clergy, jealous of any power which might overthrow their own."

"Bala.

"I have not been able to open the doors of the upper part of the cabinet, but to-day they unfolded themselves, as if by a spell. The under part opens easily enough, and is fitted with shelves, upon which I was arranging the few books, not above twenty volumes in all, which I have had to bring with me. As some of these, however, are folios, I had to rearrange the shelves to get depth to receive them; and in so doing I suppose I touched some secret spring, for, when I rose to my feet, I found that the doors which had baffled me were wide open, disclosing an object which produced the most extraordi-

nary fascination upon me that I have ever experienced. It looks the extreme of bathos to write down what, after awhile, I discovered it to be—a teapot! Only a teapot; but certainly the most wonderful work of art that ever was modelled in clay—if indeed it is a work of art merely that possesses this magnetic power. Yet in all ages men have made gods, or rather demons, and then worshipped them—demons of yet more homely and ludicrous form than that of a teapot; and it is rejecting the experience of millions of our fellow-creatures to conclude that none of these idols have been able to exercise influence for good or ill.

"It is not upon me alone that this strong piece of china exercises a powerful influence. The apathetic woman who brought me food awhile ago, stood petrified with horror when she saw it. I questioned her. She never knew of its existence—had never seen the doors of the cabinet open before. She had been the housekeeper of an old gentleman, a recluse, who had lived in the cottage; and when he died he left it her, with the furniture as it stood.

"The effect upon her was that of dread; upon me it is—indescribable; but certainly the reverse of anything like repugnance.

"This dream in china is partly woman, partly snake. The spout is formed by the head and neck of a serpent—deadly-eyed, sluggish, poison-fanged; and the folds of the writhing reptile twist themselves into a handle. The most exquisite female bust is discernible in the bowl, the pure transparent whiteness brought into relief by the brown scales which half clothe it. From this rise, as lid, the neck and head of a woman whose beauty surpasses everything which my imagination ever dreamed of. It is awful. If there ever lived a woman like that, I do not believe that any man, however virtuous, would have resisted her commands.

"There is a Sphinx-like mystery about the brow and eyes, which tells of depths that no human intellect could fathom. There is no possible pity, repentance, or relenting in the cruel features—cruel with the cruelty of fate, not of caprice. Those lips breathe an unutterable sensuality, eternal, incapable of satiety."

"Bala.

"I have not kept my journal so regularly as I intended; and perhaps, Robert, the last lines I jotted down will be all you will

receive: whether I allow what I am now writing to remain undestroyed, is doubtful. If it were ever to reach the public eye, it would annihilate all faith in my judgment and credibility, and would cause my magnum opus to be looked upon as a gigantic mystification. I even doubt the effect upon you, Robert, though you have conquered the scepticism of the age; though you *know*—not believe, but *know* that there is a spirit world in communication with the material. For there is something so incongruous, so absurd in my position, that if it were true that ridicule is the test of truth, my theories would not deserve consideration for a moment. It sounds broader than farce, it would be sheer burlesque in most ears for me to say—“I, who pretend to lead mankind back to the paths tending towards the highest philosophy, from which all thinkers have for centuries diverged, am under the thralldom of a teapot!”

“Yet we, the initiated, know well enough that beings of subtle essence do constantly and habitually infuse themselves into the most homely articles. But that is not quite a case in point either, for a conviction has grown upon me that the female face now gazing down upon me is not merely an inanimate object temporarily inhabited by a spirit. It is a being itself. A magnetic influence belongs to it which fascinates and enthralms me. I sit for days and nights before my papers—but I cannot work; I gaze and gaze, and yield to the influence. I lose sense of my corporeal existence, and become absorbed. I am only able to write this because I have wandered from the room and the house, and am out on the mountain side. But I see that face everywhere. I could not fly from it if I wished. But I have no such desire. It looks down upon me from the clouds; it is reflected in the lake; it passes across the vistas of the wood.

“Has it, think you, ever been granted to such a one, devoted to the service of a female demon, in the still watches of the night, when alone in the temple, to see speculation dawn in the moonlit eyes of his idol, movement agitate her limbs? Why does this thought excite a fearful fascination in my mind, causing my knees to shake, my breath to fail, and a cold sweat to break out upon my forehead?”

“Bala.

“Yes, Robert, I will send what I have

written, and what I am now writing; and for this reason, that haply it may be the last news you will hear of me. For I am going to undertake a great risk, knowingly, and with my eyes open. I possess a spell, acquired at great cost of research, whereby those creatures of an intermediate order, forming the link between man and spirit (as the monkey does between man and beast, the bat between beast and bird, the sea-anemone between animal and vegetable), can be forced to quit any transmigration that may hold them, and assume their original form. I can bear this suspense no longer. I shall use it. . . .”

This strange journal, which was written in a large-sized metallic diary, ended here. It came to me by the post one morning, and alarmed me seriously; causing me at the same time a feeling of bitter self-reproach for having, in the press of anxious business, forgotten entirely about the poor fellow. I now sought to atone for the neglect by starting at once for Bala, writing most urgently to Doctor Tate to meet me there. I found my cousin very ill indeed. The woman of the house where he lodged had discovered him lying in a swoon on the floor of his sitting-room, and had got him to bed. He was still unconscious, and remained so until the arrival of Doctor Tate, whose efforts to bring back his senses were after a while effectual.

I was sitting by his head, rather behind the curtain, thinking that he slept, when he first spoke coherently.

“You got my journal?” he said, in a weak but clear tone.

“Yes,” I replied, rising, and bending over him.

“I have raised the fiend,” he said, “but I cannot lay it. Nay, let me tell you,” for I tried at first to silence him. “I want to speak of it. I came home in the evening—in the dusk. I could distinguish everything, though not quite clearly. It was gone from the cabinet! Yet I felt its presence. I looked round the room, and in a large, deep chair I saw a shadowy form. I approached, and saw that face which is graven on my heart and brain, the eyes darting floods of magnetic fluid into mine. I sprang forward in rapture, and sought to kiss her; but her lips, avoiding mine, glided down to my throat, and fixed there; and at the same time serpent coils swelled from the chair,

and enveloped me in their folds, as she sucked my life-blood from my veins. When they were dry, she left me. How am I alive without blood? That is magic. She will come again, and finding no blood, will suck my life out."

He sank back on the pillow, and closed his eyes. Doctor Tate, who had come forward when he began to speak, protruded his under-lip, and slightly shrugged his shoulders. I followed him out of the room.

"He will not be here long," said he.

At two o'clock that night the patient once more started from his lethargy, and sitting up, gazed with parted lips, and eyes that started from their sockets, upon vacancy.

"She comes! she comes! I feel the slimy folds—I feel the moist warm lips!"

He fell back in convulsions, violent at first, then gradually calmer. When all was quiet, and I attempted to administer the stimulant which had been ordered in the event, I found that the soul had passed. 13

SCENTED WITH LAVENDER.

AT SUNDOWN.

DO you know what it is to be an invalid? to lie on a sofa day after day in the same position, and never stir; to look at the four walls of the same room day after day, and never anything else; to suffer the same pain day after day and week after week, and never find any relief? If you do not, thank God for it, for I do; and I assure you it is the hardest life any human being can live; hard even for a world-worn, heart-sick man or woman, but doubly hard for a young person, lively, energetic, full of ardent hopes and keen ambitions. And yet even such a punishment has its alleviations. Yes, though only two years ago I was a healthy, happy girl, full of energy and animation; even so I am not wholly wretched, and many a stray glint of sunshine peeps round the end of the sofa in the corner of the room next the window, where I lie most days and most evenings, too; sometimes reading, sometimes writing—as I am doing now—but just as often gazing out into the street, or lying with closed eyes musing over all the sweet and sad occurrences in the past or present, which have rung the changes on my chequered life.

There is no beautiful prospect to be seen from my window, no wooded hills, sparkling waves, or elaborate grounds. My home is in a London street—a small, close, stuffy house, one of a quiet terrace situated in the respectable, nay, semi-aristocratic shades of Kensington. It is not a very aristocratic dwelling itself; the staircase is painfully narrow for persons of ample size; and the

hall door, when open, comes so close up against it that it is rather difficult for a visitor to make his or her exit with proper dignity. The ceilings, too, are so low that when it grows dusk they almost seem to settle down over my upturned face; and if any one crosses the tiny drawing-room overhead, the rafters creak, and the gaseliers jingle as if the whole fabric were on the point of coming down and burying me under its ruins. But these are trifling inconveniences; and, as the aunt with whom I live says—

"If we were living in a large, vulgar house at the East-end, no one would come to see us at all, and we might just as well not have a prim drawing-room and a gilt chandelier."

Ah, well, I have no doubt she is right, and it is a comfort to be genteel, even if one cannot be rich or comfortable; at least I suppose so, though I recollect that when my dear father was alive, and I was the merriest and maddest of a large, merry, madcap family, we were all very comfortable without being positively rich, and never troubled ourselves about gentility or vulgarity, or knew the meaning of "living for appearances," the social curse of English life.

However, I am not going back to those days. There is a gulf that lies between that time and this; not a broad gulf, not a long one, only the length and breadth of a man's grave; but that gulf has made an impassable barrier between past and present, has closed a door which I would not open again if I could; for, granted that the doing so restored home and money, friends and even health, they would all weigh as nothing beside the loss of him whose lonely grave lies far, very far from here, under the fierce sun of a southern land.

But it is Sunday evening now, and I am lying on my sofa gazing out of the window, and musing, as is my wont. Exactly opposite is a Dissenting chapel, the New Jerusalem, as it styles itself; with on either side, but modestly retiring behind their slips of sun-baked garden, the residence of an artist with nine sons, and a day school for little boys. The window is open, for it has been a close, sultry summer day; and one craves for as much air as it is possible to get in this close, sultry, over-populated London. I have drawn back the curtain, too, and from my recumbent position can catch a glimpse of a small strip of pale greenish-grey sky,

against which the dark-red houses, with their writhing chimneys and pointed gables, show as if cut out. I can see also one corner of the stern façade of the little chapel, and rising from behind it a light column of reddish smoke soaring straight up into the twilight; then if I raise my head a little I get a view of the dusty side pavement over the way, along which little groups of people, mostly females, all of the poorer classes, and all dressed in the most flaring and gaudy defiance of good taste, are proceeding to evening service at the chapel. And now the parlour window opposite is thrown open, and the artist's wife, a grey-haired woman, habitually attired in a comfortable but somewhat slovenly species of bed-gown, leans out, and looks first up and then down the road, as if wondering whether the painter husband and nine sons will be home in time for tea. Poor woman! I fear she leads but an uncomfortable and irregular life, for the nine appear to be of most erratic and Bohemian habits. I do not know whether they all follow their father's profession, but I fancy they have at any rate imbibed his tastes; for I see them leaving the house at all times, attired in that semi-picturesquely ugly costume which artists in London love to affect, and bearing either canvases or paint-boxes under their arms. They come home at all times of the night, too, and I often hear loud voices on their doorstep long after all respectable people are popularly supposed to be in bed and asleep; but none the less they are a merry family enough, and the little terrace sometimes rings to the music and singing and bursts of hearty laughter which proceed from that bay-windowed sitting-room. The father, too, a handsome man with white hair, and a brow like an antique statue, looks proud and happy amid his sons; and even the anxious mother has a cheerful face, and if she be untidy, does not appear to be aware of the fact.

Ha! here *is* one of the sons—a tall young fellow, very dusty and ill-dressed, and carrying the inevitable canvas under one arm, while the other hand grasps a fishing-rod, and his pockets bulge with colour boxes, tubes and angling *matériaux*; from all which signs, I conclude his Sunday has not been spent in churches, orthodox or otherwise, but down in the green, quiet country, where Nature holds her silent court, and sits smiling and rose-crowned, in all the glowing magnifi-

cence of her summer glory. There! he has gone in now, and two of the others have come up, and the mother has met them all with a smile and kiss, and hurried them into the lamp-lit parlour, whence the mingled aroma of buttered muffin and fried herring is wafted across the way.

The last of the congregation has dawdled into the little chapel at last, and a sudden burst of nasal singing wakes up the sparrows which build among the ornaments on the portico, and sends them chirping and fluttering in a dusky cloud into the grey evening sky. They are singing the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's collection, and the strain brings to my mind Robert Browning's description of the little chapel of "Mount Zion in Love-lane."

In very truth, I do believe there is more leniency and more indulgence in Heaven for all us poor blind seekers after truth than we can find among one another. For my part, though the wish of my life has been to visit Italy, and linger awhile in that Rome whose corruption Browning stigmatizes so severely, I have never seen more of Europe than Lisbon Harbour, with its dingy red palace standing on a hill, and the green and myrtle-clad slopes of Cintra looking down on the blue, glittering waters of the Tagus. "Quem nao ha visto Lisboa, nao ha visto cousa boa," say the Portuguese, in that fruity tongue which yet sounds harsh and guttural beside the more musical Spanish; but there are places as "boa" and climates as beautiful as either Rome or Lisbon. After all, from the clear sky of Italy and the blue mouth of the Tagus it is but a jump to the clearer sky and bluer waters of that Spanish city in South America, where I spent ten such happy years.

Why, just to think of those Sunday evenings in a Monte Videan summer! One marvels they could be so pleasant, and yet so utterly different to everything that one considers pleasant and proper in English Sundays. Lying back on my pillows now, with my eyes on the strip of grey sky, and the strain of "Jerusalem the Golden" ringing in my ears, I can see quite plainly the white towers of the Cathedral—the "Matriz," or mother church, as the Spaniards term it—rising majestically into a sky, not green or grey, but blue; blue with an intensity of clearness and lustre beyond all English ideas; blue as a turquoise, or rather as a hollow sapphire of the purest water, and

studded with millions of stars, large, brilliant, grouped in glittering constellations, or shining calmly down like great gleaming eyes on the white, weary city. I see the "Plaza," with its outer fringe of acacias drooping under their white tassel-like blossoms, and its regular walks intersecting each other, and fringed by the graceful "Paraiso" or Paradise-tree, whose spreading clusters of lilac flowers make the air heavy with a weight of sweetness. I see the gay groups of brightly-dressed people—Basques and Galicians, negroes from Africa and Indians from the interior, French, German, English, slight, swarthy Spaniards, and tall, graceful, gloriously-beautiful Spanish women, with eyes like velvet and the walk of goddesses, so lightly and so gracefully they glide over the pavement—all trending in the direction of the Cathedral. I see the ruddy light streaming from its portico, and following the crowd I ascend the broad marble steps, and pass from the hot, still night into the cool, marble-paved, dimly-lit nave. High up in a white and gold pulpit, looking very like a bee in the gilded chalice of a tiger lily, I see the preacher, holding forth with impassioned tones and almost frenzied gestures. But where are the congregation? I see the entire nave of the lofty building carpeted with a swarm of bright-coloured creatures, sitting as close together as ants in an ant-hill on the marble pavement. Can they be men and women? No, all women. Spanish custom does not admit a mingling of males and females in the house of God, so we of the fairer sex have usurped the nave altogether, and fill it completely—young and old, rich and poor, white and black, sitting close together just as they happen to drop on their first entrance, save where some dame of rank or fashion has elevated herself to the invidious dignity of a low chair or a small square of prayer carpet, where she sits enthroned like an Arab on some oasis, and surveys the living desert around her. But meanwhile, where are the men? There. Don't you see them? filling up the aisles, and leaning against the huge pillars, whence they gaze with admiring eyes at the sea of dark beauty spread out before their feet.

They do nothing else; not one, except the very poor or the very old, makes any pretence of attending to the service. They are there because it is the "mode," and they go to look at the "señoritas," and exchange free comments on their relative charms, and

the "señoritas" reciprocate their smiles and glances with interest; and a great deal of whispering and giggling, mingled with the ceaseless clicking of countless fans, goes on all round and forms a sort of rippling undercurrent to the sermon and subsequent rosary. But all this while the candles on the altar have been growing and growing in number, till the whole sanctuary glares out on us, a pyramidal blaze of glittering light, and there is something in the centre which shines even more brightly still. A small bell rings, and giggling, whispering, stray glances, and arch smiles all cease on the instant. Again it rings, once, twice, thrice—and for one minute every head is bowed and every eye is closed in mute adoration, as the officiating priest raises the Sacrament aloft, and blesses the congregation.

The next moment all is over; the organ peals forth a lively strain, the candles are rapidly extinguished, the young men rush to the doors and take up a position on either side of the steps, where they stand in double rows like sentinels on guard, while the ladies sally forth in all the elegance and luxury of Parisian toilets combined with Spanish beauty, and pass slowly between the double row of their dusky and bearded admirers. And so is conducted, so ends, the most solemn service of the church in South America. After all, the nasal chanting and overdrawn "experiences" on the other side of the way are not the only faulty things to be found in the cause of religion. But see, the people have all flocked out to the plaza, now brilliantly lit and filled with chattering and flirting groups, who sit on the benches eating ices, or pace languidly about, while a full military band stirs the warm, pure air with the solemn melodies of Mozart and Beethoven. And we, too, come forth; and threading our way through the crowd—who think no harm in commenting audibly on my younger sister's clear skin and golden hair—wend our way homewards to a white house near the sea, in whose lofty rooms the windows and doors stand wide open to catch every fleeting breath of air, and where visitors soon drop in one by one, and rocking-chairs are pulled out into the long balcony, and some one goes to the piano and sings—oh! tell it not in Gath—one of Moore's melodies; and the rest lean back, and fan themselves and talk, gazing the while over a broad expanse of water, blue, still, and lustrous as the sky above, stretching away

as far as the eye can reach to the wide horizon, and studded with a triple row of red, motionless lights—the watch lights of the combined fleets of France, England, and America, at rest on the broad bosom of the mighty La Plata.

But all the while that I have been dreaming the service over the way has been going on, and the evening fast shifting into night. Once more the congregation pour out of the stuffy little chapel, and subside down the cool, gaslit street. My aunt comes down from her Sunday evening nap in the drawing-room, which she takes in company with Wilson's "Sacra Privata" and "Hymns Ancient and Modern"—one in her hand, the other on the chair beside her. My sisters walk in from their place of worship, and being admonished that tea is ready, run upstairs to take off their bonnets, one of them pausing for a moment to say, "Your young couple were not at church, Ruth. I'm afraid he is worse."

I feel sorry, and hope not. But in the meanwhile you are wondering to whom she alludes. Not to any friends or even acquaintances of mine—unless the interest I take in them entitles them to be ranked as such—but a young man and woman whose names, dwellings, and position in life are all and equally unknown to me. I saw them first shortly after we came to London, little more than a year ago. I was stronger then, and got about more, and he used to bring her and her sister, both pretty, lively-looking girls, to church. It was easy to see that he was the lover of one, and easy also to discover that neither of the girls was used to our service, for one had no prayer book, and looked about her all the time, while the other used his, following his finger to find the places, and giving a hint now and then to her sister as to standing or kneeling. This happened once or twice; and then came a Sunday when the young man walked in with one sister alone, and I noticed that she wore a white bonnet with orange blossoms, and sat very close to him, looking shyly happy. Next Sunday they came again, and when the Communion Service began she took his hand and went up with him to the altar rails, and I could not help thinking of Coventry Patmore's lines:—

"Maid choosing man, remember this,
You take his nature with his name;
Ask, then, what his religion is,
For yours will soon be of the same."

After this they never failed, and wet or dry, whenever I was at church, there too were the happy little bride and her tall husband; always together, always loving and bright-looking, and more especially so as the time came when her cheek grew paler, her step slower, and she evidently seemed to need the strong arm and tender watchfulness which were ever at her hand. And then—why then I fell ill, too ill to go to church at all; and when I got about again, the first thing I saw on approaching the church was my young couple, standing on the steps in company with a very small nursemaid and a very large baby, in all the glory of flounced long-clothes. They went into church before me, and I had leisure to notice that, though the young wife's roses had returned, her husband looked thin and worn, and coughed pitiably during the service. Their clothes, too, were, if not shabby, the reverse of new, for the pretty mamma's dress was faded, and her bonnet strings not nearly as fresh as the ribbons on baby's white robe; and I felt quite sorry for them as time went on and showed more plainly the sunken chest and hollow eye of the young husband, the poverty-stricken look of the girl, and the care lines on either brow. It was piteous to see her bright eyes filling with tears as she glanced up at him every now and then during the service; to hear the hacking cough which told too plainly of the hungry demon which was devouring him; and to mark that when they went up to receive the Sacrament now, his hand often rested on *her* arm for support.

One Sunday, after an unusually long fit of coughing, I remarked a bright red stain on the handkerchief he held pressed to his mouth. He glanced quickly at her to see if she had observed it, and, putting it in his pocket, leant back in the pew as if utterly exhausted; and when Communion time came, and she rose and offered him her arm, he shook his head with a sad smile, as if the effort were too much for him. The next moment, however, he changed his mind, and helping himself up by her arm, crept very, very slowly up to the altar rails and knelt down. Poor young thing! I saw the quivering of her bowed shoulders, and knew she was weeping; but they both looked happier when they returned to their pew, and I felt he was pleased that he had conquered his weakness, and not suffered

her to go alone to that feast they had always shared together.

I never saw them again. Once more I was back on my sofa; and I fear much that next time I am able to go to church the pew in front of me will only be tenanted by a sad little widow and her orphaned babe.

After all, there are worse lots in life than mine, and the sickness which robs a family of its prop and head is a harder cross than that which only preys on an orphan girl, with hardly a tie or duty to bind her to earth.

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

"OSSY."

TATTERSALL'S, sir? Keep straight on, sir, right past the two big 'ouses at Halberd-gate; and then, when yer comes to the keband, bear to the left, and you'll see the gates standing right afore yer."

I followed my instructions, and bearing to the left, became aware of the gates right "afore" me. There was no mistake about them, for there was too "ossy" a surrounding for the place to be any other than the one I sought. A mail phaeton, very loud in colour, stood close by; in it was a lady who looked blasé and fast. I stared at her—rudely, I'm afraid: it is my habit, as a Casual Observer. She stared at me—rudely, I'm certain—through a very large eye-glass. Her hair was very yellow, which it would not have been but for the colouring matter laid on; and her skin would have been very yellow but for the colouring matter laid on in pink and white. A pair of spanking tits—that is the right term here—were harnessed gaily to the phaeton, and they amused themselves by very impatiently nodding their heads up and down, and shaking them at a tightly breeched and belted little groom, who stood right before them, what time they seemed to be chewing soap after the fashion of epileptic impostors, and flinging the suddy foam in all directions over their own coats and the glossy habiliments of the tiger.

Beyond the tiger and his charge, a pad-groom sat in charge of a couple of saddle horses; close by, a Hansom cabby leaned over the roof of his cab, with a straw in his mouth, and read earnestly from the copy of a sporting paper which he had spread open before him. Farther on were a couple more of his kidney, discussing some late event, and more than once giving an eye to a dashing chocolate and red drag, with its four chestnuts and neat grooms, waiting patiently for their master within.

This was Tattersall's, sure enough; though I had been in doubt, for my recollections of Tattersall's had been of a place at Hyde Park Corner, down Grosvenor-place a little way, and then off behind St. George's

Hospital. Tattersall's took it into its head to move, or had to move, and the result was that it fixed the pegs of its tent down here by Knightsbridge-green, and a sale was on—"this day."

"You are quite welcome there if you will walk into the clean, red-sanded courtyard, with doors round, every one of which you could take your oath led into a stable, without having the fact forced upon you through every sense, as you see wisps of straw, smell ammonia, hear the rattle of hoofs and headstalls, taste the horsey atmosphere, and feel disposed to button up your pockets tightly, only there are no buttons.

"Who'll say a hundred guineas for this horse?" exclaims a voice, which comes from a corner where there is a rostrum, dominating a horse held by a helper and surrounded by a group—a very peculiar-looking group, by the way. The voice is that of the auctioneer, who stands with what looks like a black drumstick in his hand. He is florid, smart, and sports a choice rosebud in his button-hole. He does not look horsey, but decidedly shrewd. There is the horsey look, though, amongst his audience, as well as that of the calm, well-dressed patrician. Looking right and left, there are men with their pursuit written plainly upon their exterior. Here is the gentleman with his legs in tight "check," and coat of Oxford mixture without a wrinkle, bird's-eye neckerchief and fox-tusk pin; his hat is glossy and narrow of brim, and you may see him any morning in the park exercising a high stepper, whose price is of three figures.

Rubbing shoulders with this last is a seedy individual who stands, as well as walks, with a slouch; his hat is indescribable, he chews a piece of straw, and if he is not to be met at every low horse fair in England the fault is not his. Stud-groom is the next, with well-cut breeches, natty boots, and a cane to tap the latter very frequently. Pad-groom beside him, out of livery, and indulging in a roll of something that looks like a table cloth round his neck.

A few steps farther and there is the sleeve-waistcoated helper, with breeches and gaiters, cap slouched over his ears, and his hands making determined efforts to get to the very bottoms of his pockets, even at the expense of a stoop of the shoulders. There is a keen, eager, not to say knowing look on every face: to some it is natural, to others the result of practice; and, again, to others,

the gentlemanly portion of the audience, it is forced for the day by the knowledge that they are amongst cutting blades, and that there is danger in horse-dealing for the unwary.

But to business. The voice cries again—"Who'll say a hundred guineas for this horse?"

No one, apparently, and no wonder, for the animal looks "screwish;" his muscles stand out too prominently, and there is such a very small amount of difficulty in counting his ribs, that it is impossible to avoid thinking of the Hansom cabs used for night work. No one will say a hundred guineas, so the auctioneer proceeds:—

"Eighty? Sixty? Fifty? Forty? Thirty? Twenty-five?"

Rather an extensive descent from the hundred guineas; but if the mountain will not go to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain; so coming down to the quarter—twenty-five—some one looks at the auctioneer, and gives just one twitch of a muscle at the corner of his mouth. The man of the hammer—may be it is Tattersall himself—understands the motion, takes it as a bid, and acts accordingly. On the instant he gives a signal from the private code in use at the yard to the helper, who holds the slave on four legs; there is a shout from a policeman, "Stand back, there!" and the horse is trotted along the side of the court and back again, when another guinea is bid, and then another, till the black drumstick which represents a hammer falls, and the horse is sold.

Away goes the horse to a different stable to that from which it was brought; and the groom leads up to the rostrum another animal, which the catalogue says is "Duchess, daughter of Hokey Pokey and Bayadere;" a good hack and hunter, and a good fencer, quiet to ride, has been ridden by a lady, and hunted with the Quorn and Mr. Meynell Ingram's hounds.

"Who'll throw in a bid for the Duchess?" says the auctioneer, as she is led up to stand beside the wall, which shows dints and chips every here and there, looking strikingly like marks made by kicking hoofs. And admirably contrived to show off the shape of a horse is the attitude in which the practised auctioneer's aid, after leading the animal to the rostrum, contrives to put it—with head erect, limbs extended, but well braced, and every muscle looking taut, springy, and

as if, held in abeyance, there was so much animal elasticity waiting for a touch to spring into life.

"Now then," cries the auctioneer again, "who'll throw in a bid for the Duchess?"

But people are very chary about "throwing in a bid," for the Duchess is an old beauty, very scraggy about the neck and shoulders, very glossy and carefully got up, certainly; but that is an unpleasant smile which displays yellow teeth, and it is only on account of her aristocratic descent, and the blue blood of the Hokey Pokeys, that she gets knocked down for twenty-nine guineas—giving a violent start when the hammer falls, that looks as artificial as her manner. She walks off with mincing movement, and a voice behind growls out huskily, "Dear at thirty bob."

There is a little excitement now, and a better class of buyers make their way towards the auctioneer, for the next lots are nine hunters, the property of a nobleman. They have been well known with the Pytchley hounds, and regularly hunted up to the time of sale. There are gentlemen here now ready to bid, and they scan the points of every horse eagerly, but somehow there are faults known only to the *cognoscenti*, for, though the seller proposes a hundred guineas for the first bid, he has to come down to twenty before he gets a rise at the verbal flies he throws amongst the keen trout gathered around.

Five horses are sold, not one of which reaches forty guineas in price; but now comes one which carries a character in its fiery eye, springy elastic tread, half-defiant look, and the loud whinnying neigh. There is no trace here of anything but excellent grooming, for her skin is like satin, through which shows a network of veins. No ancient markings on the teeth, no brand of firing on the legs. Youthful, bright, and untroubled by equine cares, that little mare stands playfully by the rostrum, answering each bid with a prick of her mobile ears.

A murmur runs through the group, and people press closer. One sharp-eyed man passes his hand carefully down the beautiful creature's shins—

"Tut—tut—tut! that's wrong. Not 'ossy' at all. What ought one to call a horse's legs? Certainly not 'shins.' Your humble servant knows that he is wrong, but he dare not say hocks, fetlocks, nor pasterns, for fear of making matters worse. He knows,

however, that the knowing one is feeling for splints or spavins; so he fires off this bit of inky knowledge to hide his confusion, and shuffles off, like a literary octopus, under the cloud he has evolved.

Sixty guineas are offered at once—seventy—eighty; then there is a pause, and the mare which "carried a lady to hounds last season" is run down the court once more and back, to display her distending nostrils, arched neck, gracefully-shaped pasterns, and flowing tail. She is a beauty, and she knows it, coming bridling back to the stand, but only to rub her velvet nose against the groom's whip-armed hand, as if playfully saying, "You'd never have the heart to use that on me!" Eighty-five guineas are bid the next minute, and then there is a brisk competition, and Jenny is knocked down for a hundred guineas. "And cheap, too," is the comment.

Now come other lots—elderly animals that are at enmity with the genus homo. They know what whips are, and wince, and shrink, and bound away. One sees an imaginary stable-fork shaft in every hand that approaches; another lays down his ears and bares his teeth; while others come up surly and sullen, ready to do as much work as is forced out of them, and to eat as much as possible while they exist. You can see it all written in their leering eyes, and long, lank sides. Here is one which looks like an animated corn-bin covered with the skin of a horse; and his successor has a jaw and development of facial muscle, that bid fair to enable him to eat for ever, and then draw a long breath and begin again. Well, horses don't have much pleasure in this life, save that of eating; and if that prove to be only chaff, wretched is their lot indeed.

Temper has, of course, a wonderful deal to do with the price fetched. An ill-tempered looking but handsome beast goes for twenty-five guineas, while a free, mild-faced, gentle nag makes exactly double; and, directly after, Jolly Sailor, who has quite a pedigree, runs up to seventy guineas. Colour, too, has no little to do with price. One nag, of a pepper and salt hue, finds little favour. The favourites are the bright bays and chestnuts; and if they have black legs, they signify guineas in the seller's pocket.

The sale goes briskly on, for there are over a hundred horses—many of good name

and pedigree; but the prices fetched are not high, one very handsome pair of carriage horses going for eighty-five guineas. Much of this is, of course, due to the speculative element there is in buying a horse by auction. It may turn out a bargain, and be, as the auctioneer said of several, "given away" for a few pounds; but, on the other hand, there have been instances of horses thus bought being dear at any price.

Whish! Ah, that one will not fetch much. His legs seem to be thrown out four ways at once, and the crowd scatters to avoid the iron heels of a great high weedy beast, all bones, and legs, and ribs—a brute, something like Orpheus C. Kerr's mahogany clothes-horse, of Gothic build. But this has good birth of which to boast; he is the property of a lord, is a good fencer—"Twenty-nine guineas; all done?" rap! The black drumstick falls, and the "ossy" men gather round the beast like flies, to canvass the speculation of one of their set.

The "ossy" men are apparently satisfied, for they are jocund—that is to say, as near to jocundity as it is possible for men of their class to look. "Ossy" men don't often smile, they have a tendency to sadness. This is evidently due to the fact of their always having the muscles of the jaws in a state of tension, as they chew a straw, a strand of hay, a single oat; or, failing these, one end of their wisp-like neckerchief.

It is not a pleasant subject; but seeing this buying and selling of the equine race reminds me of the horse I bought—years ago now, but the remembrance is as fresh as it was then. That horse—cob I should say—was wanted for the four-wheeler; and distrusting others' advice—people will be so knowing about horses—I bought it myself of a dealer. I thought it certainly very nice-looking, and it possessed every quality that a cob should have—at least, so the dealer said. It was quiet to ride and drive—a good roadster—was rising seven—hardy as a Welsh pony—and given away to me at my own price.

What price? What did I give for that cob? No, never! You may put me on the rack—torture me—set Hawkins or Kenealy to worry me for a week, and seek to trap me into telling what I gave; but I'll keep that a secret, to be known by no man.

But I will confess about the cob. His colour came off in the stable; one leg somehow turned out to be shorter than the

others, when he was properly shod; and if you could drive him by a cow, a pig, a duck, a heap of road scrapings, a barrow, a child's perambulator, a white gate, a black dog, or a pump, you are cleverer than I. None of our family ever could, halt though he was; and as the whole of the above objects abounded in our neighbourhood, driving was rather an irksome task.

I sold that beast as soon as I could find any one to buy, and what I sold him for is another secret never to be divulged. He was a beast indeed, and came down in life; for the last time I saw him, he was drawing a sweep's cart, and as I passed he leered at me in a revolting manner, showing his teeth in a wicked grin, as if rejoicing at the way in which I had been taken in.

Yes, I sold that cob; and I would have sent him to Tattersall's, but I did not dare. Judging from what I have seen, I think I was right; for though a few of the bays sold were rather—rather let us say they were so incomparably superior to our cob, that—

But there, let it pass—the subject is painful; and we are at the gates, where a very tightly trousered gentleman is mounting into the mail phaeton, just as that beflowered "swell" climbs to the box of the drag; and tst! away they go along Knightsbridge, with the grooms stepping up behind, the destination probably being the Row.

JUSTICE IN THE CITY.

A SKETCH.

THE groups of rosy-faced people, "smelling of the provinces," as our Gallic neighbours funnily phrase it, who may be seen any morning, map in hand, about the City, and solemnly "doing" the various lions of the metropolis, should add to their experiences of London a visit to the justice-room of the Mansion House.

Here are to be witnessed in constant rehearsal big dramas and little farces of real life. The programme varies daily, and there is nothing to pay for seats. Few persons, however, not connected with the court by business, or in less meritorious ways, seem aware of the existence of such a place; yet

if the smallest portion of the vast clockwork of City life go wrong, it is here that the offending atom is first subjected to the searching scrutiny of the legal microscope.

Through the small apartment set aside for the administration of civic justice, filtrate fraudulent secretaries, absconding stock-brokers, reckless manslaughtering cabmen, and racing omnibus drivers, not disdaining obstructive costermongers and impudent City flower girls. A distinctive feature of this tribunal is, that whereas many extramural police-courts comprise each a wide radius of legal jurisdiction, so that delay must often be great in transport of suspects from the various stations to the judgment-room, the offences here are committed under the very nose of the Lord Mayor himself, the delinquents being honoured by an immediate introduction to that powerful functionary.

Among bankers there is a rule that should any of the employes commit a forgery, embezzle money, or in any way lose sight of the difference between meum and tuum, the instant prosecution of the offender shall follow, conducted under the auspices of the Bankers' Protection Society. A detective appears like magic on the scene, and having received his instructions, cosily—one might almost say affectionately—links his arm within that of his crestfallen charge as they emerge into the street, to all appearance two friends who, accidentally met, are about to discuss together the mid-day chop at some neighbouring eating-house. Threading their way through the busy crowds of Cornhill and Lombard-street—the officer's wary eye ever ready for symptoms of a bolt—they arrive at the grimy portals of the Mansion House, and enter the building at a small side gate, which leads by a passage to the prisoners' room, immediately beneath the court.

By this time, nearly noon, a motley and generally ill-smelling crowd of citizens is assembled on the pavement before the well-guarded entrance that faces the Royal Exchange, eagerly awaiting the arrival of the long gilt hand of the clock in Lombard-street at the hour of twelve. As the first stroke is heard, a tall, stern-faced City policeman—a fine specimen of a fine class of men—slowly unbars the gate, and the audience surges up the principal flight of steps conducting into the edifice. Many of the company are evidently more accustomed to the side door, judging from the furtive

manner in which they sidle past the red-coated usher, whose practised eye lights upon many a convicted rascal among the pushing crowd. Strange that police-courts should be the constant haunt of those who have found them but the ante-room to a prison!

The civic Palais de Justice is, like most other London justice-rooms, a small, badly lighted, ill-ventilated apartment. The magistrate is installed at a raised desk facing the audience. Some seats on each side of him form the bench whereon, when no other alderman is present, busy counsel take up their quarters to bewilder the municipal brain with their legal quips and quibbles. In the centre of the room is a large table, also appropriated by lawyers and their clerks; to the left are seats for the newspaper reporters; to the right the witness-box; and facing the judge is a sort of covered staircase, out of which the prisoner pops up into the dock before his lordship, as though propelled by some invisible agency below, the trap-door closing behind him with a portentous bang. Beyond this, shut out by an iron bar extending the whole length of the room, and packed into a few yards square, is the British public.

The peculiarly frowsy odour common to crime and criminals, not to be exorcised by the strongest disinfectants, pervades the place, and against this the civic nose is protected by a regiment of smelling bottles, spread out on the judicial desk. Presently a pleasant-looking old gentleman in spectacles takes up a position at the table in the middle of the court, directly under the presiding magistrate. This is the chief clerk, who must be a sound lawyer, putting many an incisive question to both accused and witnesses, and virtually determining the sentences of which the Lord Mayor is the mouthpiece. The members of the bar next take their places—not disguised in wig and gown, but looking most unprofessional in the loosest of morning coats and the smartest of coloured neckties.

The reporters are ready with their notebooks, and those who are to give evidence prowl uneasily about the enclosure reserved for them—some, especially the women, with a half-frightened expression on their faces; others with the self-conscious importance of possessors of valuable information. Noticeable among these is a determined-looking old gentleman, who, whenever he ventures

near the bar that separates performers from spectators, is captured by a woman of dissipated appearance, and hoarsely adjured to "let her Bill down heasy," which he invariably declines to do, evidently intending the said Bill to come down on this occasion with a hearty thump. The chief usher, a splendid creature in red and gold, concentrates all his energies in a prolonged "Hussh-sh-sh!" to enforce silence.

A sudden effervescence to the left of the magisterial chair, and a side door opens, disclosing a gorgeous beadle, who lurches into the court, and, standing at the salute, his ponderous mace planted firmly on the ground, announces "The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor," reverentially aspiring the third word of the pompous sentence. In walks his lordship, a couple of aldermen in his wake, habited in furry gown and massive chain, who forthwith proceed to instal themselves on the bench. The covered door at the same instant is thrust up, and a ragged, half-starved urchin is ejected into the dock, guarded by two formidable policemen, who stand one on each side of the young criminal—like Gog and Magog, the presiding genii of the City, till the chief clerk intimates by a sign that the first act of the morning performance may commence.

Unrolling from a greasy cloth a dozen or so of children's boots, and fixing a stern eye upon the carved ceiling above him, one of the twain unfolds his sorry tale. Speaking in a slow, deliberate tone, and pausing at every sentence to allow the clerk to take down the words in writing, he relates how last evening (always evening, never night with a policeman) "he met the prisoner in Cannon-street with a parcel—stopped him—asked him what he had there—said he didn't know—asked him where he got it—said a man gave it him to carry—prisoner tried to run up the street, and"—here policeman warms to his story, and is sharply requested not to speak so fast—"caught him in a few minutes, and took him to the station."

As the constable ceases, the determined-looking old gentleman (proof against female persuasion) steps into the witness-box, and being sworn, says that the boy, who has robbed him before, walked off with the shoes unperceived by any one in his employ.

"Do you wish to ask the witness any questions?" frowns the Lord Mayor.

The boy looks up at the tall figures each side of him, glances furtively at his mother

in court, and subsides into a whine of injured innocence.

"Anything known of him?"

Alas! too much, judging from the policeman's jerky replies to the magistrate's question.

"Had a month at this court before for picking a lady's pocket—got a whipping at Worship-street for robbing a till six months ago; his mother's always drunk."

Here is the gist of the whole matter, and everybody peers about, eager for a view of the boy's worthy relative—an occasion seized upon by the prisoner to change his cringing whine into a fearful roar of grief. In vain does the judge call for her presence in the witness-box, the woman has sneaked out of court at the first mention of previous character; so, after much stretching over his desk, and whispering with the chief clerk, the Lord Mayor leans back for the more effective delivering of the sentence.

"Boy," says he, with a dark frown, "let us see what hard labour for three months will do for you, and then you will go to a reformatory for five years." And up goes the trap-door, boy and policeman disappearing into the lower regions. A short interval occurs, during which the curiosity of the expectant crowd is excited by the noise of many shuffling feet. The slamming down of the door discloses no less than sixteen scarecrows standing in regimental order before the Bench, all clothed in a coarse kind of sacking, stitched roughly together. They appear to be of all ages—from the impudent gamin of fourteen to the hardened old tramp of seventy. The workhouse master—a fine-looking man—gets into the witness-box, and upon the solemn adjuration of the usher to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, proceeds to inform the assembled ratepayers that about six o'clock that morning the sixteen prisoners took advantage of a general row and free fight among the paupers to tear up the garments provided for them by the nation. The judge's inquiry into the reason of such eccentric behaviour is rather illogically met—the younger vagabonds declaring in chorus that "they want to go to sea," the old hands asseverating that they "aint a-goin' to eat no more 'stralian meat." How this object is to be effected, and that grievance remedied, by resolving oneself into a state of nudity the Court fails to perceive; and the strange company is marched

off to the tune of six weeks' durance vile in one of her Majesty's metropolitan prisons.

The next case is that of a brewer's drayman, who appears in the dock in the leathern apron and red cap of his trade. He is obviously intoxicated, and, after a great deal of lurching about, places his elbows on the rails in front of him, and planting his bloodshot face between his hands for support, leans forward with a drunken stare of indifference. This worthy, after driving a heavy team along Cheapside at the rate of twenty miles an hour, and coming into collision with everybody and everything, has tumbled off his seat on to the asphalte pavement just in front of the Mansion House. The police pick him from among his horses' legs, and produce him before the sitting magistrate. His sole defence being an incoherent history of his mother-in-law, he is sternly ordered to be locked up till sober.

Hitherto there has been plenty of merriment among the audience, not altogether restrained by officials whose features, professionally grim, relax at times into something like a smile, which breach of decorum is at once the signal for a general guffaw. The circumstances of many of the cases are, however, only painful in all their details. Such an one is the following:—

A tall, gentlemanly young man, whose arrest while at business we have already chronicled, stands, well gloved and hat in hand, in the place vacated by his unsavoury brethren. Modest and respectful in demeanour, he at once makes a favourable impression.

A long, lean, solemn-visaged gentleman, sitting next the Lord Mayor—the two aldermen having had enough of it, and departed—slowly rises, and fixing one eye on the prisoner, the other on his lordship, commences the prosecution in the well-known legal monotone. The prisoner, it seems, is one of the cashiers at a large bank in the City, a position involving the trust of vast amounts of money, in coin as well as notes. In this establishment, as in many others, it is the custom for the managers to visit once a month the till of every cashier, for the purpose of checking the balance of notes and counting the bags of coin then in the clerk's possession. On this occasion the authorities had found it convenient to make their usual round a day earlier than was customary. The till belonging to the clerk next the ac-

cused had been examined, his coin found correct, and the inspectors had passed on to the investigation of the prisoner's cash, leaving his companion in the act of placing his bags of gold in the small hand barrow, for removal to the safes of the establishment. The prisoner's notes were then told over and found to be accurate, his bags of gold duly weighed and counted in his presence. Five hundred sovereigns were missing! Upon turning round to demand some explanation as to the deficit, the manager discovered him in the act of transferring a bag of gold from the already examined cashbox of his neighbour to his own till, trusting by that means to escape present detection. Taken red-handed, a policeman had been summoned, and the prisoner now stood in the dock before them, charged with the felonious embezzlement of five hundred pounds. Half a dozen reporters, who have not considered the previous cases worth copy, now scribble their hardest, and the usher glares fiercely round the court for silence, eventually pouncing upon a melancholy-looking little boy, whom he summarily ejects as a disturber of the public peace. After a short pause a young man, dandily dressed in light trousers and ruby-coloured scarf (an eminent Q.C. nevertheless), darts up in the middle of the court, and demurs in energetic terms to all that his learned friend has stated with reference to the prisoner. The arguments he uses to support his theory are very powerful, and seem to have some effect upon the Court, in spite of the opposing counsel, who ceaselessly bobs up and down, pregnant with objections. Witnesses are then heard on either side, the prisoner cross-examining some of them with the energy of despair; but the evidence for the prosecution is too strong, and after some consultation with his alter ego, the chief clerk, his lordship fully commits "William Thompson" to take his trial at the Central Criminal Court.

Ere the trap-door can open for its prey, a well-dressed young woman—probably wife or sweetheart of the accused—who has been tearfully observant of all the proceedings, suddenly rises and sobs out—

"I beg your pardon, my lord; but—"

"You have nothing to beg my pardon for," is the curt reply, thus dismissing any further plea for the accused, whose lips for the first time quiver as he meets the agonized glance of his would-be intercessor.

The last act of the entertainment has reached its final scene, and the next ten minutes are devoted to the uninteresting process of hearing affidavits and granting summonses. Then one of the ushers, wheeling round to the gaping public, exclaims in solemn but illiterate accents—

"The public 'business bein' hover, all pussons is requested to retire hout."

HOW I WAS NOT MARRIED.

"A HAPPY new year!" It's all very well to wish a fellow a happy new year; but I should like to know how I am to have one. I was to have been married to dearest Eugenia the day before yesterday; but just as I was about to raise the cup of happiness to my lips, it was dashed to the ground—and here I am, the most miserable of men. Eugenia says she will have nothing more to do with me; and although she has the sweetest disposition in the world, still, when she says a thing she sticks to it. I've tried to explain, but explanations are useless; she won't listen to them.

I'll tell you how it was. I'm a nervous man—I own it; and when the day before yesterday came, of course I was in a great state of trepidation. I got up earlier than usual, so as to have plenty of time for my preparations. In fact, I was so early that my hot water had not been brought, so I had to shave in cold; and the consequence was, what with cold and nervousness, I cut myself in two or three places. Court-plaster being applied, my visage appeared more like Doctor Syntax's after his return from the wars than that of an expectant bridegroom.

I took care to get my dressing over long before the time of starting, in case I might be delayed at the last moment by any difficulty with my necktie, or in parting my hair. I never can do those two things in a hurry. I part my hair in the middle, because Eugenia used to say that it suited my expression. I generally make about six attempts before getting the parting straight; and then, the seventh time, nerving myself, I suppose, by what I was taught at school about Bruce and the spider, I usually succeed. So you can easily understand that, if I am in a hurry, there is no saying how long I may be before arriving at a satisfactory result. I must say I like parting my

hair, although there is a certain element of disappointment in not being able to get the parting straight after several efforts. I often think of the words of the poet—

"Parting is such sweet sorrow,
That I could part my hair until to-morrow."

I have given up poetry for some time—my *Eugenia* is too practical for it; but those lines cling to me. But I am wandering from the point.

I live in Charlotte-street, Bloomsbury-square. My best man lives in the country; so we arranged that we should meet, before the ceremony, in the vestry of the church—St. Martin's Church. Dearest *Eugenia's* father has his office and also lives in Spring-gardens; and as he is a vestryman as well, he naturally wished us to be married at the parish church.

I decided that eighteen minutes would be sufficient to allow myself for driving to the church; so, after waiting about an hour and a half in about the same state of mind as a criminal before his execution, I sent the servant for a cab.

"Cheer up, sir," said my landlady, kindly, as I left the house; "lor! it's nothing when you're used to it. I've been through it myself three times now, and I buried my third two years ago come the tenth of next month."

I shuddered as I went down the steps. I was only number one.

The cabman held the door of the cab open for me as I got in; and as he shut it he looked me full in the face, and, with a savage scowl, said—

"Oh! it's you, is it, my man? I've got yer at last, 'ave I?"

With that he jumped on to his box, and drove violently off.

I am not a large man, and I must say that that savage scowl startled me. I am rather timid with cabmen at the best of times, and always make a point of giving them sixpence over their legal fare. I could not understand what his remark about having got me at last meant, but I felt considerably relieved when he mounted his box and drove off.

As we drove down Bloomsbury-street, I got a shilling more than the right fare ready, in order to appease his wrath when I got out.

"Hallo!" I thought, suddenly, "he's going wrong," as, after going a short dis-

tance down St. Andrew-street, he turned sharply off to the left, into some of the pur-lieus of St. Giles's.

"Hi! cabman," I cried, putting my head out of the window; "wrong way—St. Martin's Church—keep t'y'r right."

The man only gave a diabolical grin, and, putting his tongue into his cheek, gave his horse the whip.

"Dear me," I thought, distractedly, "the man's drunk; and I shall be late at the church. What will my *Eugenia* think?"

I got half out of the window in my desperation.

"St. Martin's Church!" I screamed again.

"I know what I'm about. You keep quiet," roared the cabman, in return.

"He doesn't seem drunk," I thought; "but what can he be about?"

We were now in the midst of the slums of St. Giles's—places that I had not been in before in my life.

All at once I remembered having heard of people being taken away in cabs, and never heard of more—murdered, perhaps, for the sake of the money they had about them. I burst into a cold perspiration.

"Let me out!" I called, at the top of my voice, getting half out of the window.

"Not if I know it," bellowed the cabman; "I've been on the look-out for you for the last two months, and I don't mean to let you slip through my fingers now."

And again he whipped on his horse.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" I said to myself, "there's no mistake about it; he means to take me to some den and there murder me. Oh, my darling *Eugenia*, I shall never see you any more!"

I thought once of jumping out of the cab; but the man was driving at such a furious pace that I should have been killed in the attempt.

The streets we were passing through were of the lowest description, and the few people that were to be seen were in keeping with the neighbourhood. However, I thought that even *they* might be induced to come to my rescue. I entreated them to stop the cab, and used every gesture I could think of to explain my meaning; but they only smiled, as if it was the best joke in the world. I suppose they took me for a lunatic going to the madhouse. I sank back despairingly into the cab.

"This is awful," I soliloquized; "to be borne away in the full light of day, and

without one's friends having the least idea what has become of one."

And then I thought of the paragraphs that would appear in the different papers about the "mysterious disappearance of a gentleman."

I looked out of the window: the streets appeared so deserted that even here, in the open street, it seemed very probable that I might be robbed and murdered before help could arrive.

I made another frantic appeal to the cabman, beseeching him to let me out.

"Sit quiet, or I'll turn you over," he said, threateningly, over his shoulder.

Thoughts of contusions and broken limbs passed through my brain, so I drew back. All uneasiness about the wedding party waiting for me at the church had now left me, in the greater anxiety for my own safety.

We were going at the same violent pace when the cab suddenly turned a lane narrower than the rest.

"Now my fate is sealed," I thought; but no, still my agony was prolonged, and in a minute we emerged into a wider thoroughfare; and at last, after another turn or two, we pulled up.

The man jumped down, and opened the door.

"Now, then, tumble out," he said, brutally. I am not a large man, as I think I said before, but I resolved to sell my life dearly. I sprang out.

Hurrah! the first person that met my gaze was a policeman.

"Here, policeman, help!" I cried, rushing up to him.

"Well," he said, slowly, "what's the matter?"

I was proceeding to explain, when the cabman pushed forward.

"I gives this 'ere cove into custody," he said, "for going off without paying his fare."

I started.

"Two months ago," he went on, "I druv him from the City to the Burlington Harcade; and when I put him down, he slipped in at one end and out of the other without paying me."

"There's some mistake," I exclaimed. "I wasn't in London two months ago." Looking at my watch, I found it was five minutes to eleven. "There's certainly some mistake," I continued; "and what's more, I

must be off. I have an important engagement."

"Not so fast, sir," said the policeman, laying his hand gently but firmly on my arm; "come to the station, and the inspector will take the charge."

There was nothing for it but to comply; so I accompanied the two into the police-station, for it was there that the cabman had driven to in such hot haste.

When I saw the inspector, I protested to him that it was all a mistake, but without effect.

"The magistrate's sitting now," he said; "and after one or two other cases are disposed of, he will be able to take yours."

My heart sank. What was I to do? I ought already to be at the church, and I pictured the consternation which must already have begun at my non-appearance.

"I can't wait a moment longer," I exclaimed, passionately. "I *must* go."

The inspector expressed his regret, but told me that I could not.

All at once a happy thought struck me.

"Here, cabman," I said, "what was the amount of the fare?"

"'Arf-a-crown," he answered.

"Then here are five shillings," I replied, handing him the sum.

The man slowly closed one eye, and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"I dessay you'd like it," he said; "but you don't catch me a-taking it. I mean to prosecute yer, now I've got yer, to the last drop."

My spirits fell again.

"How long is it likely to be before we can get it settled?" I asked, anxiously.

"Can't say exactly," replied the inspector; "ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, very likely."

"But—but—I am going to be married this morning," at last I blurted out; "and I ought to be at the church by this time."

"Very sorry, sir," said the inspector, coolly, as if I had only said it was time I went to lunch; "but if gentlemen will get into trouble, they must take the consequences."

"But it wasn't me at all, I've told you," I replied, furiously, regardless of grammar.

"Jest wot the claimant says," remarked the cabman, sententially.

"You see," continued the inspector, "the case must either come on now, or you must

be bailed out; and it would take as long to do the one as the other."

I paced up and down the room in uncontrollable excitement, looking at my watch the while.

Five—ten minutes elapsed, and still the other cases were not finished.

I had reached a state bordering on frenzy, when the inspector at last said it was our turn, and we went into court.

I felt almost as guilty, as I entered, as if I had really committed the offence.

The cabman stated his case: about some person who had taken the cab from the City to the Burlington arcade, and had gone away without paying his fare.

"And there he is," he said, pointing to me.

Of course I flatly denied the charge, explaining the impossibility of my being in London at the same time that I was at Margate.

"How do you know this is the gentleman?" inquired the magistrate.

"I knows him by his general look," answered the cabman, "and partic'larly by them black things about his face."

"I only put the sticking-plaster on this morning," I exclaimed, triumphantly.

The cabman said nothing to this, as he was fumbling in his pocket.

"This'll prove it," he said at last, drawing forth a glove; "he left this behind him."

"Let the gentleman try it on," said the magistrate.

The glove was passed to me. Now I am rather proud of my hand. I take seven and a half, ladies' size; and this glove was about nine.

"That is certainly not a fit," said the magistrate, smiling, as I put my hand into it.

The cabman, changing countenance, looked rather sheepish.

"That's queer," he said, slowly, scratching his head.

"Are you still certain this is the person whom you took to the Burlington Arcade?" asked the magistrate.

"Vell, I don't know," replied the man, dubiously. "You see I made sure it was him, specially when I saw that black stuff on his face; but p'raps, arter all, it was some one else. Now I come to think of it," he added, "the fare as cut away was cross-eyed."

"Was what?" asked the magistrate.

"Cross-eyed," replied the other, in a louder key, under the impression that the magistrate was slightly deaf.

"Do you mean he squinted?"

"On course I do, your wuship."

"Kindly look at me, sir," said the magistrate, addressing me.

Dear Eugenia used always to admire my eyes—she said they were so expressive; so I turned them with confidence on the magistrate.

"This gentleman does not squint," he said.

The cabman was now thoroughly at fault, and could only scratch his head and say nothing.

"You have clearly made a mistake," said the magistrate, severely, turning to the cabman; "and I consider the gentleman has just cause to complain of the slight grounds on which you have based the charge against him. It appears to me that the sole proof of identity that you had was the sticking-plaster."

"Vell, and wot does he go a-sticking the stuff about his face, a-deceiving of folks, for?" asked the cabman, in injured tones.

"The case is dismissed," said the magistrate, curtly.

Casting a look of mingled rage and reproach at the cabman, I hurried from the court. I did not venture to take another cab, but sped on foot by the shortest route to the church. When I arrived there, it was only to see the verger closing the doors.

"Be you the gentleman as was to have been married to-day?"

I replied in agony that I was.

"Then the party left five minutes ago," he said. "They thought you wasn't coming."

I thought at first of going in pursuit; but I found it was too late to be married then. Besides which, I was in such a state of excitement that I could not make up my mind to encounter the wedding party; so I rushed off home, and as soon as I had a little recovered, I penned a note of explanation to Eugenia.

She sent back a cutting reply, refusing to have anything to say to me, and concluded by telling me that she could never consent to be led to the altar by one who had stood in the felon's dock.

Now wish me a Happy New Year!

OFF THE TRACK IN NORWAY.—I.

IT is a long road with few turnings that leads from Christiania, through the valley of the Gudbrandsdalen, over the Dovre Fjeld to Drontheim, the northern capital of Norway. One summer's day, the writer of this and a well-trying companion of his, whose name is well known in the Swiss Alps, were bowling along a stretch of this road in one of those curiously constructed carriages called "carrioles," which are licensed to carry one passenger, when suddenly the ever-welcome station came in view. For the information of those who have never travelled in Norway, it may perhaps be well to explain that these stations are, for the most part, farm-houses, situated at certain intervals along all the great roads of Norway, serving the purposes of inns, and also post-houses; the keepers of them being bound, in consideration for a fixed sum, to supply the traveller with horses to carry him on his journey. Into the yard of one of these stations, my friend and myself urged our reluctant steeds; and seeing a somewhat dusty and travel-stained individual leaning against a post, we took him for an ostler, and, summoning up the best Norwegian we could command, inquired if it were possible to obtain horses. To our surprise,

the dusty gentleman replied, in tolerable English—

"I do not know, but I tink you can. I am de priest of Lom. Will you come and stay with me?"

The invitation was somewhat sudden, coming as it did after an acquaintance of half a minute's duration; however, we replied that we should be very pleased to accept his hospitality if he would inform us in what part of the globe Lom was situated; whereupon our newly-found friend produced a map, and pointing to a tract of country right away in the mountains, said—

"There is my home."

Having agreed to visit him in it, we watched him spring into his carriage, wave his hand to us, and disappear in a cloud of dust. The little village of Lom, we soon discovered, was situated at the extremity of a great valley under the shadow of a mountain called Lomseggen, about forty miles from the main road, and sixty from where we then stood. After following the high road for a couple of stages or so, we came to a mountain track, which our map indicated would, if followed, bring us to the desired settlement.

On the following day, after having refreshed ourselves with a night's slumber, we set off to tramp the distance; but as the way was long, and the sun immoderately hot, we did not come in sight of the wished-for hamlet until the clock in the little Norse church of the place was chiming the midnight hour. Being in the month of July, it was still broad daylight in those northern latitudes, but no sign or sound of life was to be discovered in the village. The whole of the community were evidently sound asleep. The clergyman's house was the only pretentious dwelling place in the district, the rest being mere peasants' huts. Not liking to knock the worthy clergyman out of his slumbers, we resolved to go in search of a lodging for the night.

After following the track for half a mile or so, we came upon another cluster of cottages and sheds, but still could see no living thing, so the only course to pursue seemed to be to arouse the natives; accordingly my friend selected the door of one cottage, and I that of another, and commenced a series of knocks, which grew louder and louder as time went on and our impatience increased; but still we appeared to create no impression whatever, and only the echo of

our blows disturbed the serenity of the sleeping village. We tried kicks, we hollloed the one to the other to encourage perseverance, and generally made night hideous with discordant sounds; but the villagers were deaf to our cries, and despair began to take possession of our worn-out frames. Just, however, as we were thinking about returning to our clergyman's house, and throwing ourselves upon his forbearance, a window opened close to where I stood, and a girl's face looked out. Her hair, loose as Aphrodite's after her bath, and the white garment she wore, clearly indicated that she had but that moment risen from sweet repose. Putting on the most amiable smile I could muster for the occasion, I inquired, in what I considered to be very superior Norse, if we could sleep there that night, and was much gratified to receive in reply the pleasant monosyllable—

"Ja."

A minute or two afterwards the door was opened, and the owner of the face and hair stood before us, and bade us enter. The nymph led us along a passage into a room, in which two small compartments had been cut in the wall. In these apertures had been placed some hay, some skins, and some fleas, in—as we thought at the time—about equal proportions; but it is possible that we may have been somewhat led away by our feelings in regard to the quantity of the latter. However, tired limbs and easy consciences can sleep anywhere, and our rough bed of hay, of skins, of fleas became sweet to us as pure white sheets and eider-down.

We were aroused next morning by the entrance of the young friend who had admitted us, and who, clothed in the gay glory of her Sunday attire, brought us the cup of coffee which, in some form or other, is to be met with in the humblest and poorest cottage in all Norway. We made known to her that breakfast would be desirable, and gave her to understand that we would have anything she had in the house. Shortly a few pieces of what we had reason to believe had once been meat made their appearance; but from what species of animal the same had been hewn we could form no reasonable conjecture. It was nearly black, and tougher and drier than ordinary leather. On the table, by the side of this tempting dish, our Hebe placed a platter of the coarsest "flod brod" we had yet come across in Norway. Its appearance was

exactly that of a piece of bandbox mixed with scraps of hay. A pot of coffee completed the bill of fare; and upon this *ménu*, with all the relish we could muster, we fell to. It was some satisfaction, however, to be able to discharge our bill for board and lodging with the modest sum of sevenpence halfpenny each.

The village church, a very miniature affair indeed, stood a short distance from the priest's house, and there we expected to find the good man at his ministrations in the midst of his flock, as it was then between eleven and twelve o'clock on the Sunday morning; but on our presenting ourselves at the door of the small sanctuary, we found it closely locked, and clearly no service was going on within. A farm servant, however, came across to us from the priest's house, and by the help of signs gave us to understand that our friend, his master, had gone off to preach at one of his other churches some fourteen miles away, but would be back by five o'clock in the afternoon; and he further added that the good pastor was duly expecting us.

Having replied that we would call at the appointed hour, we crept into a shady place by the riverside to escape the tropical heat, and there by the side of a waterfall let the hours roll dreamily by. At five o'clock we again bent our steps to the parson's mansion, but found that the good man had not returned. We were, however, shown into the best room of the house, and thus had ample opportunity for examining the appurtenances of the place; but hunger speedily became the one paramount and absorbing subject with us. We were well-nigh famished with long abstinence, and the only speculation rife within us was the question of how much longer it would be possible to hold out before actual starvation set in. A sound of wheels upon the mountain track, however, soon revived our drooping spirits, and in a few minutes the door opened and our acquaintance of the roadside burst in upon us. Like a father welcoming home his long-lost sons, so did the good man receive us with outstretched hands and open heart. Talking very volubly in broken English, he lavished all manner of affectionate terms upon us, grasping our hands the while with a warmth of affection which was pleasant indeed. His good wife received us in like manner, as did also a blithe and bonny girl, his niece, and a good soul, the housekeeper.

Within half an hour of the arrival of the master of the establishment, we were all sitting down to a repast the like of which we have never seen before or since in Norway. To all intents and purposes we were out of the world of men and women, at the confines of a valley into which for eight months in the year the sun cannot penetrate; and yet, outspread upon the table were all the luxuries of civilization, all those delicacies which one would imagine were as alien to the Norwegian land as pomegranates to the soil of London streets. None the less were they enjoyable on that account, and our meal was, we fear, somewhat prolonged; but as Thackeray has it, "Even the Eastern Counties trains must come in at last," so it came to pass that even our stay at the table terminated after a time, and we went out with our clerical host to inspect the old homestead. A large farmhouse with rambling outbuildings and labourers' cottages stood in the midst of the priest's grounds. On three sides the everlasting hills with crowns of snow looked down. In places their sides were hard, steep, and bare; and in others gentle slopes, covered with the product of the labourers' toil, rose refreshingly towards the rocks above. In front of us Lomseggen, with his shroud of snow, looked down upon the jocund valley.

"On yonder crag," said our host, pointing to a promontory of Lomseggen, "tradition states, once stood Olaf, the Christian king, when gazing down upon the valley below, he vowed by his good sword that Odin and Thor should rule the hearts of men no longer; so, striding down into the Norsemen's village, he preached Christ with his sword, and all the men in that long valley, with trembling and with wonder, were baptized."

After our tour of inspection was over, we returned to the house and listened with charmed ears to the wondrous singing of the young girl whom I have before mentioned.

In almost every European language that young northern nightingale trilled out the songs of all nations; and as the Argonauts in old times listened with forgetful hearts and lulled energies to the singing of the sirens of the Northern Sea, so did we, on that halcyon evening, listen to the sweet melodies of that young Norwegian girl.

On the morrow we procured the services

of an old reindeer hunter to guide us along an unfrequented track over Galdho Piggen, the highest mountain in Norway, to the great Sonde Fjord, a distance of about ninety miles.

With exceeding difficulty we tore ourselves away from our kind entertainers, who one and all did what they could to persuade us to lengthen our stay indefinitely with them.

Ollé Ulverson, our guide, was a tough old hunter of reindeer, who having lived all his life on the Fjelds, as it were, was as capable as man could be to steer travellers straight through the vast and bewildering snow fields which cover the Sonde Fjeld. On one shoulder he carried his rifle, and on his back was strapped his knapsack, containing a certain amount of provender to sustain us on the journey.

After walking, scrambling, &c., for some dozen miles or so over rocks and through pine forests and desolate moors, we came upon a mountain pasture, in the centre of which stood a small soeter, or wooden hut. Pushing open the door and stooping down, we entered, and found ourselves in an apartment a few feet square. In one corner of the room was a large hearthstone, on which blazed a fire of wood, over which a vast kettle was suspended, attended to by a girl of some thirteen years' experience in the ways of life. The place had no flooring save the bare earth, and no furniture to speak of save a few pans. On the rafters overhead were placed a couple of boards, with a cowskin laid upon them. Presently a woman came in, and ladled out to us some hot milk, from which, with the help of a little flod brod, we made a hearty though somewhat liquid supper. Signs were then made to us to climb up on to the before-mentioned boards, and there rest for the night. With some difficulty my friend and myself accomplished the feat; and after wrapping ourselves in the skins, and with considerable ingenuity interlacing our limbs with each other to avoid rolling off, we proceeded to refresh ourselves with some hours' sleep.

Early next morning we set off to make the ascent of the Galdho Piggen, the king of the Scandinavian range, the Mont Blanc of Norway. Our party consisted of the before-mentioned reindeer hunter, a youth in training for a guide, and our two inexperienced selves.

GAME.

FRANK, Tom, and myself were clerks in a large house of business in one of the principal towns in Suffolk.

We lodged together. We were sitting chatting over the fire one Christmas Eve, enjoying ourselves with some whiskey hot, and as nice a bit of bird's-eye as was procurable, when Frank suggested that, as we should have a holiday on Boxing-day, we couldn't do better than have a day's shooting.

"Capital idea!" remarked Tom, "nothing would please me better."

I did a wild pirouette round the room, finishing up with a break-down à la Mackeney, with delight. Just the very thing!

Hadn't I, as a boy, succeeded, by an immense amount of coaxing, in wheedling my brother to lend me his gun; and hadn't I, by exercising as much cunning as an Indian on the trail of an enemy, succeeded in getting within a few yards of a chaffinch, and, by using a stump of a tree as a rest, fired and thoroughly dissected the object of my ambition? I can well remember the thrill of delight that pervaded my youthful frame as I saw the feathers fly and the bird fall. What a hero I thought myself!

Well, it was decided that we should have a day's shooting, but then came the question of arms of warfare. Frank could borrow one gun; but as Tom and I were not so fortunate as to have a friend possessed of the needful, we began to look blue.

"Well," said Frank, "if we cannot procure two more, we must take it in turns to fire."

This didn't come up to my idea of a day's sport; so, after a great deal of ruminating, we waited in a body on an iron-monger, whom we persuaded into allowing us to hire two guns for the sum of ten shillings.

Boxing-day arrived. We were up betimes, and laid in a stock of ammunition—nearly, I afterwards found, enough for a week—and off we started, using the utmost care in carrying our guns as sportsmen, and feeling as big as—well—clerks.

Modesty prevents my saying how we looked, but at any rate we got horribly chaffed en route through the town. One young urchin was very pressing to know whether we had insured our lives; another as to our having taken the precaution to make our wills; and other playful remarks were aimed at us. We were good-tempered—not a single touch of bile in our whole bodies. Wasn't it Christmas time, and were we not going to have a glorious day, and had we not all an invitation to a party at the principal confectioner's in the evening—which confectioner, I may here add, possessed some jolly daughters, one—Amy—being the jolliest, sweetest, and prettiest of the lot—in my eyes.

We were soon out of the town and into the fields; and now for sport.

Frank gave us strict injunctions to keep our eyes open. We did.

Tom would stick close to me with the

muzzle of his gun generally in a line with my head. No luck through first field. We did see a flock of starlings, but they wouldn't be circumvented. At last I got a shot at a lark, and missed it. He—it must have been a he—commenced warbling away with the greatest nonchalance, and, I thought, treating me with contempt; taking no notice of my shot, but gently gliding into the next field. Tom thought I had fired too low. I thought I had forgotten to put any shot in my gun, but I didn't say so. Before I had again loaded, I espied another bird coming over. "Now!" I exclaimed, "here's a chance—look out."

Tom, I must mention, was uncommonly near-sighted, and carried an eye-glass, which eye-glass was always a source of trouble to him, for after screwing his features into the most frightful contortions, that glass would not stick in his eye. I have known him to spend no end of time in attempting to fix it without avail. He now wears spectacles.

"Where?" said Tom, excitedly.

"There; coming right over your head—make haste."

Up went the glass, and a glimpse was caught of the bird, now out of range; the gun raised, steady aim taken at the spot where he imagined the bird to be, report; up went the eye-glass with a view to seeing the effect of the shot. The bird didn't fall; but Tom would persist in affirming that it was hit; and there he stood watching until it was out of sight.

"Better luck next time," he said, when he found the bird was really gone; but the better luck never came.

Frank all this time had been sauntering some thirty yards in the rear, and looked very happy, puffing away at his briar-root. I now chanced to look towards him, and at that moment he commenced the most singular capers: down went his pipe, his arm waved to us frantically, which we construed into "don't make a noise," he began stealthily walking on the tips of his toes to the hedge: gun raised—aim taken—gun down again—up again—more tiptoe business. This was repeated over and over again, till at last he fired, with a ya-hoop—rushed up the bank, and began searching diligently in the hedge.

We thought he had bagged a prize, so went to gloat over the spoil. We helped in

the search, till at last we suggested that he had missed his bird. This ruffled Frank's plumage, and he went vigorously again to work, and with a shout of victory held up to our admiring eyes, a—well, tell it not in Gath—tomtit. He was as proud as if it had been a pheasant. This put new life into us, and we hoped to be in a position to carry home a good bag—I think that is the correct term.

The fates were not propitious. "Whether the birds were impressed with the unerring decision of our aim, or whether the guns would not carry true, our sport was bad, in fact, outrageously bad—birds couldn't be got at. Even if we did manage to get within shooting distance, we either fired too high or too low, or at this or the other side. We had left fields behind us, having walked miles, and were now on ploughed land. We were just getting off one piece into a lane, when we were accosted by a man having the appearance of a farmer, who, in anything but dulcet tones, inquired if we knew what we were doing.

"Certainly," replied we—"shooting."

The next question was, who had given us permission. Frank, always of a merry turn of mind, and thinking the questioner was rather impertinent in thus catechising us, informed him, "Snooks." This didn't satisfy him. Had we a licence? We informed him that as neither of us contemplated marriage at that moment, we did not possess a licence. This rather upset him: he wanted our names and addresses, which we declined to give, and thought it quite time we turned the tables; so we inquired after his health, where he resided, and asked if he had not some good home-brewed at home, and would he not invite us to taste it?

He didn't take kindly to our badinage; informed us we were three young asses; he was the owner of the land; we had been trespassing, shooting without a licence, rendering ourselves liable to a prosecution. He was inclined to think we had been after game, and insisted upon our showing him what we had in our bag. Poor Frank, he carried the spoil, and I shall never forget his dejected aspect when he held up to the indignant farmer the little tomtit. Although I was shaking in my shoes at the position in which we were placed, I could not help bursting out in a hearty laugh, and even the old farmer could not resist a smile. We apologized, gave him our names, but failed to

appease him. He turned on his heel, and walked away with a parting salute that we should hear further of the matter.

We went home, sadder but wiser men; we had undoubtedly got into hot water. Here was a pretty ending—one tomtit, and a summons for trespass in prospective. It was no use brooding over it, so when evening came we dressed and went to the party; not, however, in our usual spirits. We didn't feel lively; there was that horrible meeting with the farmer, and the anticipated parade before the magistrates always cropping up. We were generally the life and soul of the company, could sing a good song, comic or sentimental, play the piano, &c., so were in request. This night we were distrait, and I suppose our looks betrayed us, for there were many inquiries after our health. We tried to be lively, but miserably failed.

The weight of woe must have been very vividly portrayed on my countenance; for Amy, almost with tears in her eyes, implored me to tell her what was the matter. Who could resist such pleading? So I unbosomed myself, giving her a full description of the injured party.

She was most particular as to whether I had described him correctly. Had he sandy whiskers? was he fat? and was I sure he had a scar on his cheek?

"Then it must be Uncle Johnson; and he is coming here later in the evening, with my aunt and cousins."

This was piling up the agony with a vengeance.

I wanted to be off *instantæter*; this she would not hear of. I had better stay and face it like a man. He was not at all of a vindictive disposition, and she thought things would turn out, perhaps, more favourably than I anticipated. I stayed, looking with dread every time the door opened, expecting to see his angry visage confronting me.

My two confrères, in the meantime, were recovering their spirits. Should I go and tell them what was in store? No. I would alone suffer! Just when such magnanimous thoughts were uppermost, who should be announced but the very identical party. I made myself into as small a compass as possible, and shrank behind my fair enslaver.

The first persons his eyes alighted on were Frank and Tom. Their eyes at that moment alighted upon him—they looked

the home of Shakspeare, since his journey has only been by tramway from Whitechapel, just beyond where the butchers' shambles stand a-row, and the broad road is encumbered with hay carts.

We had seen the interior of the great station, with its eight vast engines, each with a twenty-seven ton beam working a couple of pumps, their united efforts lifting millions of gallons of liquid refuse from that low-level sewer, thirty-six feet, to the high-level sewer, whence it flows of its own gravity to the Thames, miles away.

We had seen all this, and now stood in what is termed the filth-house to see the dregs, scum, waifs, strays, flotsam and jetsam of the London sewage; and upon exclaiming respecting the mal-odour, our guide tells us that use has educated his sense of smelling so that he cannot detect this vile vapour which fills the building where we stand. It is a lofty, open, stone-paved place, with six large shafts yawning in the floor, and a horrible, rushing, hollow noise, as of subterranean waters hurrying along far below. And this is the case; for along three channels the sewage of twenty-five square miles of London is dashing on into the vast pump wells, to be sucked through large pumps nearly twelve feet round. But lest anything solid and hard should reach these pumps, we have the six shafts at our feet, down three of which are lowered by chains and weights as many iron-barred cages or strainers, which fit in front of the sewage channels, and through which the liquid passes, leaving its scum and larger dregs behind.

And now, while these three strainers are doing duty, other three have been raised, loaded with unutterable filth, which a couple of fork-armed men remove in barrows to a heap outside, upon which one of them, as he empties his barrow, dusts chloride of lime—the extent of man's chemistry. Nature does the rest, for it is let by contract to the market gardeners of the district, and goes to enrich their soil with phosphates, nitrates, and fertilizing salts enough to puzzle a chemist. What have we? Nothing to the extent that might be anticipated, only some two or three cartloads a day more being brought down after a storm has flushed the sewers of sediment. But there are some strange things, nevertheless. Tiny relics of humanity, telling of crimes of which baby-farming is but one outlet; rags of all kinds, once white and coloured, but such now as

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

AN UNPLEASANT PLACE.

“POOF! What a horrible smell!” and by an involuntary action a handkerchief is placed to the nose, with the effect, not of stifling the horrible odour, but of filtering it, and making it leave some of its impurities behind.

“Now, do you know, I cannot smell it!” The last speaker is the superintendent of the great pumping station at Abbey Mills, near Stratford—that noble-looking, cruciform, Alhambra-like fane, with chimney shafts after the fashion of Eastern minarets, the whole standing up like a palace amidst the squalid, hideous, stench-creating factories of Bow-common. For pray do not imagine that the Observer has been paying a visit to

no marine-store dealer would buy at the lowest price; paper, from the least shred of news, in filthy pulp; corks by the ton, in the course of the year, from those doll-like little pellets that stop the homœopath's globule tubes, through every size of phial and bottle cork, to the big and beery bung that comes sailing sedately down with the solid consequence acquired by intimacy with London's stout.

Not much in a cork; but this one tells of watching nights by a sick pillow—"One-sixth every three hours;" this again says plainly—"Here y'ar—only a penny a bottle."

That one has the marks of the wire, and stuck in a soda-water bottle's throat; that again has a stain on its bulging end—log-wood or generous port—who knows? While here again is a gouty cork, that blew out with a report when wire and string were loosed—a kingly cork this, who began life as garment to a mighty oak in a Spanish forest, and afterwards ruled in Champagne. His silvery tinfoil crown yet adheres to his head, and as he lies there prone upon the filthy heap, one thinks of fallen greatness, and of the feast or dissipated riot where he parted from his friend, the bottle.

Enough of corks. What else have we? Do not treasures come down, we ask—silver spoons, or rings—lost jewels? "No," says our guide, "the men never find anything of the kind;" but there is a peculiar twinkle in his eye, as he adds—"Nothing is ever brought to the office!"

Rush, rush, rush—the water foams along below as we look at the filthy dripping cages, seeking for salient points amongst the loathsome mud, to see patches of hair, and, in another place, garbage—the refuse of some slaughterhouse—hurried into the sewers that sweep on busily always beneath our feet. The filth that might be expected to abound does not seem to exist, dissolving as it comes in the floods of water. Indeed, so little solid matter is there that, after passing through these cages, the sewage lifted by the pumps contains no very great number of grains of solid matter in the gallon, and a phial thereof in a few hours shows clear water, with a little dark sediment at the bottom.

But all the same, it is a vile odour here, for these last miles of the sewers pass through a busy manufacturing district whose chimneys vomit strange vapours,

and whose refuse passing into the sewers generates compounds of gas that float above the waters, and lurk in the channels till fired by a light, when they flash along in a deadly blaze, carrying death and destruction in their wake.

Parts of the sewers here are as dangerous as a fiery Staffordshire mine; for Bow-common has its chemical works and distilleries of strange things, factories of blood manure and dye, soap and scent. If there is a nauseous or poisonous trade to be carried on, it finds its home at Bow; and, in spite of enactment and fine, its filth gravitates to the sewers.

What more is there in this heap? The eye and understanding almost fail to tell, while the nose curls with repugnance, and refuses to lend its aid. There is grease, though, there, evidently the contribution of some sink; but it is battered out of its sixpence-like shape.

There is something here, though, whatever it may be.

Worm?

No!

Snake?

No!

Sewer leech?

No!

But all the same, it is something round, and taper, and long, limp, and black of line. A rat's tail! and behold the body that belongs—the rat himself—a long-whiskered, rodential don, with sharp white teeth; a grease-feaster, who has in his search for delicacies ventured too far from his friendly drain, and been swept down the current to one of these ghastly well-holes, where he has swum and swum till endurance failed—till he sank down—"A rat, a rat, dead for a ducat!" one of hundreds who meet the same fate, scavengers, as they are, of London's veins, and useful but for their propensity to burrow and destroy.

Another cage comes up, with a hollow, plashing noise, the foul water dripping from it fast, until it hangs suspended, and a man, hale and hearty-looking in spite of nineteen years of such work, goes up with a barrow to unload it of its burden. He thrusts in his sharp fork, and drags the dripping rubbish from the slimy bars. There is the same matted paper and rag, rotten and loathsome hair, and what seems to be bone. There is a tangle, too, of cane, which tells of fashionable distension. On the water

pitiful, and inclined to faint. I was the next object of his gaze. I don't know how I looked. I felt small—very small. Amy at once came to the rescue. She went and gave the old man a hearty kiss—how I envied him! she was his favourite niece—and then, with blushes, introduced me. I bowed with all the grace I could muster, and held out my hand, and, I suppose, taking compassion on my hangdog look, and the fact of Amy being interested in me, he took it, smiling a most peculiar smile. The same ceremony was gone through with my two friends in adversity, after which Amy took him on one side, and, by dint of coaxing, succeeded in getting him into a forgiving frame of mind.

Our fair intercessor advised us to strike while the iron was hot, which we did—frankly apologizing for our rudeness, and hoping he would accept our contrition, and forget the unhappy episode. He was a brick!—the most expressive word I can find—forgave us there and then, but would persist in giving the company a resumé of the affair. We bore the roars of laughter with fortitude.

"The young dogs!" he finished with. "I could have looked over their shooting and trespassing; but to add insult to injury, by wanting me to invite them to taste my home-brewed, was too much. But now I promise them they shall, for I've got a bit of a party coming off; and if they will only come and sing my favourite old song, 'The Farmer's Boy,' next Wednesday"—(aside to me, "Amy will be there, you young ass—dog, I mean")—"they shall have it to their heart's content."

Need we say we went? How many times the chorus to "The Farmer's Boy" was sung I don't know; but we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, coinciding in our views that it was the jolliest party, and he was the jolliest old fellow, we ever came across.

Frank had the tomtit stuffed, and it now decorates his study.



PUTTING ONE'S FOOT IN IT.

READER, have you ever "put your foot in it"? I know you have, some time or another. Every one must be acquainted with the indescribable thrill which passes through him on finding that he has committed himself. You are perhaps holding an interesting conversation at a musical party with a young lady to whom you were introduced a few minutes ago, while another young lady, at the piano, is giving a general invitation to the company to "meet her once again." You remark in an off-hand way, "Wretched voice that girl's got—pity they let her sing," when, glancing from the performer to your companion, you suddenly realize that they match like two volumes in a set, both being neatly got up in book muslin and green trimmings. A shudder passes through you, and it does not require the lady's distant manner to tell you that the fair performer is her sister. Of course, you proceed to talk wildly about nothing at all, hoping against hope that your remark was unheard; but the conversation, such as it is, flags, and you take an early opportunity of slipping away from the offended sister. Or perhaps, at another time, while talking to a friend on amusements in general, you remark casually that you hate backgammon, and only play it when driven to do so. It is not until half an hour afterwards that it flashes across you that, on the very last occasion on which you were at this friend's house, you spent two long hours in rattling the dice and being taken up.

Such contretemps as these must at times fall to everybody's lot, but there is a certain class of individuals whose fate it seems to be to "put their foot in it" on every available occasion. There are some unhappy men who are perpetually floating calmly and unconsciously into the very midst of a dilemma, and then floundering helplessly about like a fish in a net. Or else, as some of them do, floating in and out again with mild complacency, unconscious of any harm, while every one present tries to assume the same appearance of happy unconsciousness.

Take young Mr. Chaffinch, for instance. He would not intentionally say anything personal for worlds, and yet he can scarcely open his lips without committing himself in some way. He has been within an ace of having his head punched two or three times by certain irascible victims of his unfortu-

nate speeches, when all the time he was under the impression he was saying something very complimentary or very witty. So sure as there is an opening for Mr. Chaffinch's special faculty, so sure is he to take advantage of it. He rather prides himself on filling up awkward pauses in conversation; and if he can do nothing better, he will ask a riddle. Unfortunately, his riddles are generally personal. Conversation having flagged in the middle of dinner, Mr. Chaffinch thinks he cannot do better than set it going again by asking one of his pet riddles. It so happens that his opposite neighbour is a lawyer; what can be more appropriate, then, than to ask the company generally, and this gentleman in particular, the well-known riddle about the resemblance between a lawyer and an uneasy person in bed? Everybody wonders and looks at the ceiling, and Mr. Chaffinch smiles blandly. At last they give it up, and Mr. Chaffinch does the same with the answer. Now, the riddle, although it may be a good one, is hardly complimentary to the legal profession; so the answer falls flat, and the lawyer seems to see the joke less than any one. If a riddle does not happen to strike him, Mr. Chaffinch makes conversation by saying playfully across the table—

"I saw you the other day, Mrs. Macaw."

"Yes?" says the lady, with a sweet smile.

"Where was that?"

"Ah! I wonder where: can't you guess?" returns Mr. Chaffinch, smiling. "The Miss Macaws were with you," he adds, as a sort of assistance to Mrs. Macaw's memory.

"Wherever could it have been? Do tell," scream the three Miss Macaws in chorus.

Everybody's attention is now aroused. Mr. Chaffinch's heart is not adamant; and at last, as if he were giving an answer to one of his riddles, he says, "It was at the corner of Tottenham Court-road;" and then he goes on as if the best part were still to come—"You were just getting out of a 'bus."

As Mrs. Macaw and her daughters are never supposed to ride in any more public vehicle than a hired brougham at least, it is as well for Mr. Chaffinch's peace of mind that he does not hear the remarks that are made about him by the four ladies when they go home.

Although Mr. Chaffinch is always getting into trouble when he is in company, in his

own family he gets on smoothly enough. It is only when he is engaged in making polite conversation that his mishaps occur, and at home one seldom is so overwhelmed with a sense of politeness as to manufacture conversation.

Poor Mr. Jones is the man to put his foot in it at home. He lives in a state of continual dread of what his next words may bring upon him. It is hardly his fault, poor man; as he is blessed with that most trying of all possessions, a partner of an uncertain temper. Not that she scolds—oh, no; but she is one of those ladies who, in their own opinion, suffer a perpetual martyrdom.

Mr. Jones has been married twice, and, according to the present Mrs. Jones, he is always referring to the deceased in terms detrimental to his present spouse.

He is a great man for reminiscences, and if he happens to begin—

"When poor Eliza was alive—"

"There, I'm sure it's a pity I am not in my grave," breaks in the injured Mrs. Jones. "You are always talking in that way. I know you wish I was dead."

"I was only going to say, my dear," remonstrates Mr. Jones, pathetically, "that when Eliza was alive, meat was a penny a pound cheaper than it is now."

"Yes," returns the martyr, not to be pacified, "and I know you think I have something to do with the price of the meat. But, never mind, I shall be gone soon, and you will be able to have another Eliza."

At this stage Mrs. Jones's feelings are generally too much for her, and she has recourse to her pocket handkerchief.

If on another occasion Mr. Jones happens to remark, "Isn't this chicken a little tough, my dear?" his spouse replies with a resigned air—

"I can never do anything right. I chose that chicken myself. You are always complaining."

"Oh, I am not complaining," hastily puts in the meek Mr. Jones. "In fact, I—I rather like it tough."

One of his friends happened to quote in Mr. Jones's hearing, the other day, the old proverb—

"Think twice before you speak once."

"Ah!" murmured Mr. Jones, with a sigh, "I generally think half-a-dozen times, and then say something wrong after all."

There are some unfortunate individuals who are always getting into hot water with

the other members of their family, by injudiciously dragging things from behind the scenes which in reality should remain in the farthest background. The Tomkineses, for example, have a brother who means well, and who is old enough to know better; but he is always making unhappy remarks.

In the middle of dinner he will call across the table—

"Oh, Eliza, I took that chig. of yours to the hairdresser. He says it's all right, and you shall have it back to-morrow."

Young Mr. Arundel, whom Eliza admires so much—in fact, she is quietly setting her chignon at him—looks aghast, both on account of the delicate nature of the communication, and also at finding that the adorable chignon is false.

Poor Eliza is so overcome that she can say nothing.

Old Mr. Tomkins is nearly as bad as his son; and Eliza has hardly cooled from the effects of her brother's remark, when the old gentleman suddenly says—

"Why, Eliza, what have you got your best earrings on for?"

The simple old gentleman has no tact. Mrs. T. noticed the earrings a quarter of an hour ago, but said nothing. Was not Mr. Arundel's presence sufficient explanation for any sensible parent?

After Mr. Arundel has gone, Eliza fires up at her brother.

"Tom, how could you say that about my chignon before Mr. Arundel?"

And turning to Mr. Tomkins, senior, she adds, in an injured tone—

"And, papa, I wish you would not make remarks about my dress when strangers are present."

Father and son look rather sheepish; but murmur something about not seeing any harm in it.

Another of those who are always putting their foot in it, and with whom we have little sympathy, is the would-be funny man. If he only knew the amount of anything but good wishes which he almost daily brings down upon his unconscious head, we think that it would take all his funniness out of him for the rest of his days. His wit seldom rises above a pun; but we will say for him, that he seldom misses an opportunity of displaying it in this form. Personal or otherwise, a pun is a pun to him, and out it must come. If at a friendly gathering there should happen to be a Mr.

Graves present, our funny man would, without the least hesitation, ask him, in a tone evidently intended for the rest of the company to hear, whether he is not a very sly dog.

Mr. Graves of course looks rather mystified, but says that he does not know that he is.

"Oh! rejoins our friend, "I thought you must be, because most graves are deep."

Mr. Graves seems to bear out the character given him, for he certainly conceals his admiration of the pun very effectually.

On another occasion, when his family have a few friends spending the evening with them, and when they wish to appear specially genteel, he will shock all their nerves by asking his daughter Jane whether she buys her plums by the dozen, as she has put so few in the cake. Jane, who is not supposed to have so much as seen the cake till the last few minutes, much less to have made it, expresses her opinion to her misguided parent concerning this question at the close of the evening, in the privacy of his own family.

It is only a person here and there who has the peculiar faculty of putting his foot in it in cases like the foregoing; but there are occasions when even such cautious people as you and I, reader, are liable to be caught tripping. One of the most fruitful sources of danger in this respect, and against which no one is entirely proof, is the double entendre. We remember an instance which happened to ourselves. We were dining out at the time, and had next us one of those spinster ladies of uncertain age, who always make a point of enjoying to their full extent the good things of this life. She had just been helped to her third glass of champagne, and while it was still effervescing she remarked, with a delightful simper—

"How it froths!"

Wishing to follow up the remark, we said, in a moralizing tone—

"Yes, but it goes down very quickly."

Now, reader, we have a tender heart, and would not willingly hurt the feelings of a tadpole, so you may imagine our distress when we observed immediately afterwards the double meaning of our words.

We always pity those poor men who can never make the smallest attempt at a speech without going through a succession of absurd blunders, chiefly in the shape of doubles entendres. They generally see them themselves

directly they have made them, and the consequence is they are in a perpetual state of correcting and explaining what they said a moment before. There are few men who, having committed themselves by any unlucky remark, are able to withdraw from the dilemma gracefully; and as a result of our cogitations on this subject, we think we may lay down the following aphorism, "that the man is well bred who never puts his foot in it; but he is better bred who, having put it in, is able to take it out again with success."

OFF THE TRACK IN NORWAY.—II.

THE mountain we were attacking stands completely out of the track followed by the generality of visitors to Norway, and is very seldom ascended, although the actual difficulties of the ascent are inconsiderable. The first half of the way, after leaving the soeter, lies over vast masses of bare, bleak rocks, with here and there a little reindeer moss growing between them, and the second half is made up of snow and ice slopes of varying steepnesses. With an axe and a rope there would not be the slightest difficulty in traversing these slopes; but travelling as it is the custom to do in Norway, with neither of these protective accessories, the danger of a slip on some of the ice slopes of the upper portions of this mountain is by no means remote, and there is no telling where an animate or inanimate object would stop when once fairly launched upon them. We reached the summit, however, after some seven hours' climbing, without any mishap, and an exultant shout and waving of hats proclaimed that at last all Scandinavia lay beneath us, with no inch of her soil above.

From the crown of the "old Norse giant" the view is unique of its kind. Away and away, far as the eye can wander, there are huge and monstrous shapes, the fantastic freaks of Mother Nature, all covered with eternal snow, on which the sun glistens with a bewildering brightness and whiteness. Yonder to the north, the bleak regions of the Dovre Fjeld stretch in almost unbroken solitude; far away to the south, the Jostedal glaciers rear up their frozen waves; and all around are the monarchs of the Sonde Fjeld, the grandest group of Titans ever ruled over by Odin or by Thor.

The cold on the top of the mountain was, notwithstanding the sun, intense, so that we

did not delay our journey down so long as we might otherwise have done. The course we pursued in descending lay over a mountain called Stygge Braen, or Bad Mountain, so named from the treacherous nature of its snows, which are full of hidden crevasses, the presence of which can only be discovered by the most practised eye, and very often not even by that. With a good stout rope and a pleasant party of four, well linked together, we might have gone floundering merrily and harmlessly on through the snow, indifferent as to crevasses or no crevasses; but walking singly, in a state of entire uncertainty as to whether or no the next step may launch one into darkness, is rather ticklish work, and in Switzerland would be looked upon as only one remove from insanity.

No harm happened to our party, however, and we got quit of the snow without the loss even of a single individual. The next part of the journey lay over rocks flung about in reckless confusion, as though Master Thor in the old time had taken to making roads, and, growing tired of his work, had left it only half completed.

It was past twelve o'clock at night before the haven of refuge, long hoped-for, and long pictured in our minds' eyes, appeared in view in the shape of a log hut. Upon the door of this cabin we thundered with all the strength left in our worn-out frames. Presently a gaunt creature, in the similitude of a woman, opened the door, and we crept in, and found an apartment in which were two rough bedsteads covered with skins. The good woman had evidently just vacated one bed, while a boy was peacefully reclining in the other. After partaking of milk and flod brod, my friend and myself encosed ourselves beneath the covering from which our hostess had so recently emerged, and forthwith unconsciousness ensued, for we slept a sleep that night which nearly rivalled in intensity the repose of Rip van Winkle himself; and twelve hours rolled by before we again awoke to the world.

Our journey over the great Sonde Fjeld took us through one of the most desolate regions to be met with in all Norway, but I must not so outrage the forbearance of my readers as to pause to describe it now; suffice it to say that we reached the Fjord, and duly sailing along its narrow waters, arrived at Gudvargen, from whence we crossed over to the Hardjanger Fjord, and taking boat

came on Saturday night to Uttne, one of the choicest spots in all Scandinavia. The place stands on the shores of the Hardjanger Fjord, and is composed of a cluster of cottages surrounded with gardens rich in roses and fruit trees. It is approached by no kind of road, and access must be obtained to it by water, as the everlasting hills completely surround it, leaving only room for a few acres of hill pasture and corn land immediately around the village.

There is a goodly station at "this village by the sea," presided over by an ancient dame of comely form and winning manners. The old lady is assisted in her duties by her fair daughter, Thorbjorn, who, no matter what the weather may be without the house, must surely make it seem like summer all the long year round within, for—

"A form more fair, a face more sweet,
It ne'er hath been my lot to meet."

Amid the pleasant bowers of this small northern Paradise, a Sunday wore itself away; and on the Monday morning the quarters, like Mr. Tennyson's Miller's Daughter, "had grown so dear—so dear" that we could not make up our minds finally to quit them.

We therefore arranged to make an excursion to the top of a neighbouring mountain, the shining precipices of which, on the other side of the Fjord, formed the most prominent feature in the landscape visible from the windows of our bed-room. This mountain, all unknown to fame, is called the Oxen; and from its summit the view of the long arms of the numerous Fjords into which the coast is divided is most curious.

A youthful Charon ferried us across the water to a small landing place on the other side, and then undertook to guide us by a narrow ravine to the height of our ambition and the object of our desires—viz., the summit of the hill. After about four hours' stiffish climbing, we completed the 4,500 feet of ascent from the water's edge, and reached the storm-scarred, weather-worn cairn which marks the mountain's head. The extraordinary panorama of land and water spread out below fairly compensated for the parched lips and panting lungs which the climb had imposed upon us. As I write, I have a most natural desire to paint in glowing terms and in probably somewhat exaggerated language, after the manner of travellers, the wonders of the vision we

beheld from the Oxen's topmost crag; but I will on this occasion, out of respect to the feelings of both my old and young readers, waive any such description, and proceed at once to give a short account of what I have a somewhat uncomfortable presentiment my patient readers will conceive to have been an act of sheer, unadulterated idiocy.

There enters sometimes into both men and boys a strange, mysterious impulse which seems to lead them almost irresistibly into folly. It is an unaccountable desire to risk both life and limb for no conceivable object; a feeling something akin, perhaps, to that rapture of the fight which Lord Byron sings so grandly of. At no time is this impulse felt more strongly than upon the mountains, when the free, fresh air that whistles over the snow, and intoxicates more potently than strong wine, has had its due effect. This madness came upon me on the summit of the Oxen, and I succumbed to it.

Purposely lagging behind, after guide and friend had departed, I proceeded to put my plan into execution. The plan was simply this, to climb straight down the face of the cliff to the shores of the Fjord, and there await in exultant triumph, as I fondly dreamt, my less adventurous companions.

Inspired with this ambition, I worked with extraordinary energy and perseverance to overcome the preliminary difficulties of the enterprise, grappling with every obstacle as it arose with an almost ferocious impetuosity, and for a time my efforts seemed tolerably successful, and I made fair progress. But speedily I came into a place where it became clear, even to my excited brain, that neither energy nor impetuosity would suffice to bring matters to a satisfactory issue. In a word, the cliff became too smooth and perpendicular to proceed farther, except at a speed which, to a man not tired of life, would have been altogether inconvenient; so, as it was also impossible to move along diagonally, I took the only course left, and, curbing my ardour, began to scramble back in the way I had come; and then, by making my way to the right, to essay a downward course once more. With considerable difficulty I put this idea into execution, and succeeded in getting below the evil place which had so annoyingly baffled me; but presently the cliff became one bare, smooth, even sweep of rock for

perhaps 1,200 or 1,300 feet, without an impediment at all sufficient to stop any object that once got any impetus upon it from toppling from the summit of the precipice to the bottom. Still, as the die was now completely cast, there was nothing for it but to grapple with the evil, and if possible, with much caution, to overcome it; so I commenced the combat by holding on with hands, and feet, and eyelids, so to speak, at the same time lowering each foot on to any little knob or ledge that might afford the smallest particle of foothold. In this way I laboured for some time; but gradually the cliff grew steeper and smoother, and the knobs and irregularities more and more scanty, until at last I found that I had reached a spot where there was absolutely no resting place for either hands or feet, save the tiny ledge to which I was clinging. As I looked down for a moment in bewilderment as to the best course to pursue, I fell into the folly of speculating as to the results of a slip; and as the foolish thought swept through my mind, the very contingency I was dreading really came about: my treacherous boots, which were partially iron-shod, seemed to slide from under me, and I shot away down the polished wall, gathering impetus every moment. With hands, elbows, and heels I made desperate and convulsive efforts to stay my course. I clutched at every tiny knob of rock; I pressed my hands and elbows against the hard, smooth surface, but all unavailing, as the speed of my descent quickened terribly. I remember crying out in startled agony to Heaven, and thinking that at last I had indeed flung my life away, when I felt my heel suddenly anchor on some small projection, and became conscious that my course was arrested. As soon as I had a little composed my trembling limbs and soothed my agitated nerves, I began to take stock of the position, and was not long in coming to the conclusion that I had scant cause for congratulating myself much on it. I have been, both before and since that day, in several "tight" places in the Alps and elsewhere, but that was certainly the tightest. I was balanced on a tiny ledge of rock, an inch or so in breadth, which only extended a yard or two on either hand, and then became merged in the smooth, cruel wall of stone.

Three thousand feet below, the waters of the Hardjanger Fjord were lapping the crags;

fifteen hundred feet above, the frowning summit of the mountain stood out clear cut against the sky; to the right hand and to the left there stretched the smooth implacable face of the cliff, with no lines denoting pity or kindly help upon it. I could see the white cottages of Utne, surrounded with fields all yellow with God's "waving gold;" and nearer still the broad bosom of the water, with scarcely a ripple upon it; and far away in the distance the snow-capped hills on which Thor and Odin played such pranks in the days long since gone by; but the landscape was to me as less than nothing and vanity, and the stern features of the pitiless face of the cliff close around were the only objects that I cared to study. My sensations were not pleasant—I objected to terminating my budding career on the lonely rocks of an obscure Norwegian mountain; and yet, as I looked down on the long sweep of the precipice, that unpleasant contingency would persist in forcing itself on my mind, for it was clear that I could not remain there always, and to move either up or down appeared equally impossible. Four miles away a dog barked, but the sound only seemed to make the solitude more intense, and the thought of dying thus alone was absolutely intolerable. In despair I raised my eyes upwards, and saw the heavens, and

"They were clear and blue,
And in the liquid ether
The eye of God shone through."

So I resolved to make a desperate effort, at any rate, to escape from the fix into which my folly had brought me.

The tiny ledge on which I was resting became melted away into the cliff on each side of me; but I noticed here and there, at varying distances, similar ledges, which I determined on attempting to reach. The first thing to be done was to divest myself of my boots, in order to obtain a firmer hold upon the rock; and this was, in the position I then occupied, a not altogether easy task, as standing on one heel on a narrow ledge while you are incontinently tugging at the other, is no doubt pleasant enough for an acrobat, but for a plain tourist it is apt to be embarrassing. However, I happily succeeded in getting quit of both my understandings, and in stowing them away in my side pockets. Thus relieved, I entered upon the task of extrication; and after about an hour of breathless anxiety, in which I

played the rôle of an unhappy fly clinging to a pane of glass, I succeeded in getting off the smooth rock on to a stone of a much softer description. For a time I made better progress; but presently a sheer precipice presented itself, which utterly baffled every effort to overcome it. Just then my attention was turned to a torrent of water, which came roaring down from the snows at the top of the mountain. This was on my right hand, and I conceived that by climbing some little distance back I might possibly manage to get into its course. With considerable difficulty, and by the help of a pretty long fall, I succeeded in carrying this plan into execution. I then discovered that I had gained a cleft in the face of the rock along which the stream ran for some twenty yards or so, when it fell away in a waterfall of considerable height over a smooth polished face of rock. To slide down with the rush of the water appeared to me to be the only means of escape from the place, as on both sides of the ravine were precipices to all appearance inaccessible. So I determined to make the trial and shoot the rapid; and was actually on the point of launching away, when the thought intruded itself into my harassed mind that I should get so mangled on the rocks as in all probability to incapacitate me for further efforts; so I gave up the idea, and abandoned the thought of progress in that direction.

I next turned my attention to the possibility of climbing up the torrent; but here again I was speedily checkmated, for the comparatively level ground between the high cliffs presented such facilities for harbouring snow that the way was completely choked up by it; and as there was a running stream of water constantly passing under the accumulation, a tunnel some eight feet in height had been formed, which baffled all my efforts to surmount.

I was now as completely imprisoned as any shipwrecked mariner on his raft, or captive in his dungeon; and as the mariner eagerly scans the far horizon in hopes of seeing a friendly sail, so did I look out wistfully over the water to the white cottages of Utne, longing for deliverance; and as the captive beats against the bars of his cell, and seeks carefully for some flaw in its walls or gratings by which escape may be accomplished, so did I vainly bruise my limbs against the rocks and stones, and with abounding interest scrutinize the position, if

happily I might find some way out of the dilemma. But the problem was not to be easily solved; so, after partaking of a copious draught of water, I sat down on a stone to contemplate the position in as calm a frame of mind as circumstances would permit. The idea of having voluntarily imprisoned myself, although somewhat ludicrous, was to me by no means amusing; and the prospect of having to spend the night supperless and cold, half-way up a black cliff, was the reverse of entertaining; so I stamped up and down the little space at my disposal, speaking of my folly in no measured terms.

The more I looked at the waterfall at the base of my prison, the less inviting a plunge down it appeared; the more I regarded the snow which bounded the upper portion of my cell, the more impassable that way appeared; and a renewed careful scrutiny of the cliffs which formed the walls of my dungeon only seemed to make them more and more inaccessible. The only possible egress apparently was by the way down which I had fallen into my prison; and as this course, even if I succeeded in effecting a passage by it, would only take me back to the exact place I had left so gladly some time before, I looked upon it simply as a means of escape from the Cave of Scylla to the cruel rocks of Charybdis. However, variety is pleasing, even in misfortune; so I determined to make the attempt to scale the cliff, down which I had rolled some hour or so before. Again and again the attempt was a failure; but at last, after long patience and great tribulation, I managed to scramble back to the very same position I had occupied some time before. I then crawled along the face of the cliff for some distance; and after another hour or so of breathless anxiety, got back into the water-course, at a point just below the waterfall, which had for so long baffled me. From this point my progress became much easier; and although the ravine down which the torrent rushed was an exceedingly rough road to travel, and my body rapidly became one uniform bruise from the numerous slips I made on the rocks, yet it was a path of asphalt when compared with the pitiless cliff I had just left.

Presently I descried, far away below me, two figures excitedly waving their hands and indulging in various extravagant gestures. These I soon discovered to be my long-lost guide and companion, whom I

speedily succeeded in reaching, and with them glided back rejoicing across the Fjord in blissful security to Utne.



SCENTED WITH LAVENDER.

OUR CHILDREN.

HOW one misses children! One of my school-boy brothers came up to town awhile ago for his holidays; and for a few weeks my sofa ceased to be the quiet haven of dreaming solitary hours. The dull parlour rang with bursts of boyish laughter. Two sturdy young legs cut wonderful

capers, and turned more wonderful summersaults over the well-worn carpet. The tiny table at my side, usually sacred to my books and writing materials, became a perfect Golgotha of gaily bound prize books, balls of twine, limp gingerbread nuts, saucers of paste, and weak and gummy cardboard erections, supposed to represent St. Paul's or the hull of the ill-fated *Captain*, and resembling nothing but a heap of damp and decaying linen; besides a host of minor articles too numerous to name.

During these few weeks too my sofa was constantly vibrating to the drumming of a pair of stoutly-shod feet, my nerves quivering to the sound of unwonted crashes or heavy falls, intimating that the young gentleman was either succeeding in breaking something or trying to break himself; and my head frequently aching with the strains of "four-and-twenty brisk young fellows" or the "Laird o' Cockpen" alternately whistled and shouted in the treble octaves of a decidedly more powerful than strictly musical young voice; and with all this I was happier than I had been for many a long month before.

There is something so cheerful and inspiring in the presence of children. Their young heads propound such wonderful questions to be solved by yours, and their bright eyes await the answer with such unhesitating faith, that you feel put on your mettle, and strive to shake yourself out of your usual mental indolence, that you may appear to better advantage while in the neighbourhood of these thirsty young souls, who always seem ready to gauge and expose your ignorance at a moment's notice. It is all very well to be the owner of a fine garden; but if one neglects it entirely and pays no heed to planting or pruning, it is not pleasant to have it ruthlessly invaded by a band of eager young florists, who march in hoping for bright flowers and luscious fruits, and return empty-handed or laden with weeds. Under such circumstances one is apt to rise in the night, go into one's neglected territory with watering-pot and spade, and set to work to improve the ground a little—as I did when I undertook to teach a small brother of mine arithmetic, and found that I had to begin by teaching myself; that the superficial, lady-like knowledge sufficient for daily use was utterly inadequate to explaining anything beyond the A B C of arithmetic, or working out the simplest mental problem with an intelligent

child of nine years old, whose first question was likely to be, "*Why* must I do so and so?"

Writing of the early days of his Indian mission, Bishop Heber said, "I was horrified in the first place by my people's ignorance, and confounded in the second by my own." It is supremely so with children; and for that fact alone I think their companionship a special boon and benefit to those who, leading a lonely or sedentary life, are apt to let their minds grow rusty and their education run to seed for the want of a little timely polish and care.

And then the intense spring and vitality in these little people! Does it not seem to put a new element of life into ourselves; to act like a shower of rain on the dried twigs of our existence, and freshen them up into a green and healthy plant? Does not the very sunshine seem brighter when it glitters among the golden curls of a little child at play? Don't we appreciate the blue sky more when we see it reflected in a pair of laughing baby eyes? Have not the creases in life grown wonderfully smooth when a wee, dimpled creature has learnt to nestle lovingly down in our arms, and all other squabbles and worries and disturbances must cease because "Baby's asleep." Aye, and must not be disturbed either, if we would not likewise awaken a roar lusty enough to deaden every other sound within the radius of a hundred yards.

By the way, what a wonderful comfort it seems to be to a child to emit those said astounding noises. They are not particularly pleasant to the hearers; but, considering the very small cause, or no cause at all, from which they proceed, not to speak of the swollen, purple, and crimson condition to which they not unfrequently reduce the young performers, the gratification derived from them must be sufficiently great to make that person an arrant self-worshipper who, to save his own ears, would silence them at once and for ever.

I remember on one occasion deriving much pleasure from one of them myself. I had been romping or fighting, the latter probably—for I was a pugnacious child—with a small brother and sister on the top of a bank, when in the struggle I lost my footing, was pushed over it, and came down in a heap on the flower-bed below. My juvenile enemies fled, and I picked myself up. I was not a bit hurt, hardly shaken;

and was a great deal more conscious of the double fact of a fine heart's-ease crushed under my plump person, and an approaching governess, than of any pain whatsoever; wherefore I was on the point of sneaking quietly away like the culprit I was, when, glancing downwards at my person, I became aware that a very small piece of skin was missing from my left knee, and a still smaller drop of blood issuing from the wound. This was quite enough. I became instantly impressed with the delightful sense that I *was* hurt, and that, instead of being in fault, I was a terribly injured and much-to-be-pitied individual: an opinion upon which I immediately acted by re-subsidng on the bed of heart's-ease, and giving vent to such an appalling roar that not only was punishment an unthought-of thing, but my unhappy brother and sister, impressed with the idea that they had killed me, took refuge in a musty boot closet, and were not disinterred therefrom for many hours: a time they probably spent in the most abject terror and remorse.

Talking of this, I wonder if the greatest hypochondriac, the most blood-stained criminal, ever suffers one tithe of the fear and misery undergone for days and weeks together by many a rosy-faced, innocent child of eight or nine years old; periods of suffering all the more intense that they are concealed with a persistent fortitude which would have done credit to Foxe's martyrs.

Why, in our childish days we had a nurse; a kindly old Scotchwoman, possessed of an interminable fund of stories relating to the arch enemy of mankind; who, she was firmly persuaded (and as firmly persuaded us), had been residing visibly and bodily in Edinburgh during the latter part of the last century.

These anecdotes she was in the habit of retailing to us whilst putting us to bed, and no one who has not experienced the sensation can imagine the amount of mental anguish I endured during and after these recitals. I have little doubt now but that my brothers and sisters were similarly affected; but one and all of us would rather have died a hundred deaths than have confessed our cowardice to one another; so we nightly underwent the same penance, and when nurse used to say in answer to the petition for a "story"—

"Oh lor! yes, deary. I knows a story as is powerfu' interestin', an' a gospel true;

but it's a wee bit uncanny, ye ken, and nae-body who is 'frighted need listen," we all stanchly asserted ourselves strangers to the very name of fear. I am afraid, however, that my pale face and nervous starts told another tale; for nurse frequently singled me out with—

"Now, Miss Ruthie, gin you're feared, say the word, an' I'll put ye to bed afore I begin."

Of course Miss Ruth did not "say the word," and the nights of horror she underwent in consequence were almost enough to turn an older head grey.

Very little do many, of even the most tender parents, know of the inner life led by the children they idolize. If they did, more than one nurse and governess, who are now spoken of as "that dear old Robins! such a treasure in the nursery, quite adored by the children," or "that good Miss Jones, the best teacher we ever had, so superior, never wanted to go out, and quite changed Tommy from a noisy, troublesome boy to the gentlest child you ever saw," would have been put outside the house at a day's notice, and with such a character as would not have aided in smoothing their entrance into another family.

Perhaps things are better as they are. To the best of my belief, neither Robins nor Miss Jones would have opened their lips if they had guessed one quarter of the suffering they inflicted on the little minds in their care. Robins pours out her lengthy ghost stories to little Mary out of sheer thoughtless garrulity, and a wish to amuse the child. Miss Jones threatens naughty Tommy with the Evil One who goeth about "seeking whom he may devour," and then locks up the sinner in a dark closet to repent. Mary and Tommy suffer an anguish of terror and pain, it is true; but nurse and governess know nothing of it, and are hardly responsible for the infliction. Besides, there are some children who are unfortunately gifted with such intensely nervous, imaginative natures that they are able to make a little Purgatory for themselves out of the most peaceful Heaven their friends can make for them. I fear I was one of those children, for I know I suffered intensely from fears which were of no living being's creation but my own; and which would have been perfectly ludicrous, had not so much pathos mingled

with the absurdity. One of them I know related to a certain convict, whom, for the nonce, I choose to call Mr. Christy. We passed our childhood in one of the smallest and most remote of her Majesty's colonies, a mere speck on the Southern Ocean; and in this lonely spot the keeper of a small and somewhat disreputable public-house took it into his head one night to batter his wife to death, which he accordingly did. He was tried for the crime and was duly sentenced to seven years' transportation with hard labour; a sentence which could not be carried out until the arrival of a man-of-war which could convey the convict to his destination; Mr. Christy in the meanwhile being imprisoned in the colony gaol, and set to work in chains on a peat bog not far from our house.

Now, my father had been one of the magistrates on the trial; and happening to overhear some of our servants talking the case over, I gathered that Mr. Christy had threatened to "be even wid de masther wan o' these days. Blood was thicker than wather; an' ef he didn't git free to pay the debt hisself, there were many o' his familie 'ould settlle it for him." Well, this speech, the very vagueness of which increased its horror for a child, weighed on my mind till it became a perfect nightmare; and never a day passed without my expecting to hear that Christy had cut his way out of the slight, wooden erection, dignified by the name of a prison, and had murdered my father. If papa was out late in the evening, I suffered agonies lest he might be waylaid on his homeward route; and even when we were all seated round the blazing fire at night, chatting and talking, I kept a constant watch on the door and window, lest I might see the shadow of the murderer on the blind, or his ungainly figure lurking in the dark passage. I even fancied that Christy himself was aware of my knowledge of his intentions; and if, in the course of our walks, we passed him at his lonely labour, I would avert my eyes in nervous dread of seeing the gleam of malicious triumph I fancied sparkling in his. I never told my father of my fear, never breathed it to any one, much as the doing so would have relieved me; but the impression must have been very deep, for nearly ten years later I, a grown-up young lady, was seated in our South American drawing-room when the maid came in saying—

"An Englishman wanted to speak with the Señor. Could he see me as the Señor was out?"

Of course I said "Yes."

My father at that time held a high position under Government, and I imagined that the man was probably some deserter from the fleet, or distressed emigrant seeking assistance; judge then my feelings when the door opened to admit—Mr. Christy! It was years since I had seen him. He had grown stouter and more florid, and the prison garb of grey and yellow was exchanged for a suit of sober black; but I knew him in a moment, and in that moment all the old horror, the realization of that childish nightmare, rushed back on me so keenly that, with a barely smothered cry of terror, I actually turned and fled! What the man thought, Heaven only knows. Probably, that I was mad. It was not likely that he recognized the little child who used to pass him so shrinkingly years ago in that far distant island. Possibly, his errand was as I imagined, and he did not even know who my father was, apart from his official capacity. I never solved the mystery. The maid got rid of him with a civil message, and I never saw him again. I trust I never shall.

I dare say some one is saying by this time, "How uncommonly learned about children this old maid is! She must be very fond of them." Yes, my friend, I am very fond of children, and of babies in particular. Most literally to me come the words "of such is the kingdom of Heaven;" and in this workaday world it is folly to throw away such tiny glimpses of Heaven's sunlight as come across the grey monotony of an invalid's daily life. Besides, every woman with an ounce of womanliness about her must have something to pet—a husband, a child of her own, a female friend, a cat, a monkey, a bird, or even a flower. Now, I don't believe in female friendships except in very rare cases. Flowers are not given to flourishing in London, and birds are apt to die or get killed in some unpleasant way just as one grows fond of them. Of cats I have a special and utter detestation; and as for monkeys! . . . please don't mention them.

Not feeling inclined, then, to pet any of the above-named articles, and being deprived by my premature old maidenhood of the blessing of a husband or bairn of my

own, I am constrained to take the entire genius Baby under my protection, and pet and care for them whenever and wherever I may happen to come across those dimpled pocket editions of humanity.

After all, it is not a bad school for a woman. We cannot all be wives and mothers; but there is many and many a hapless little orphan whose life might have been smooth and sunny, many a tiny grave which never need have been dug in the green turf, if the sacred instinct of motherhood were more cultivated among the maiden aunts and lonely spinsters who abound on every side.

There are many mothers of large families who neither nourish, teach, nor look after their children; who, beyond the mere fact of bringing them into the world, seem to have less care for their life therein than the meanest of the hired servants who attend to their childish wants; mothers who lead lives dedicated to society, literature, selfish pleasure—ay, even *charity*, without giving more than a cursory thought, a careless order every now and then to the little creatures which God has given them to be trained and cared for as His pet lambs, to be educated for loving wives and faithful husbands, and to bless the declining years of their parents' lives with answering love and devotion.

Can we wonder when such parents complain of the bitter disappointment their children are to them? Disappointment! Why, in God's name, what do you expect, you fathers and mothers, who neither trouble yourself to correct your children's bad, nor foster their good passions; who actually lend the first hand towards destroying their baptismal purity by giving a free rein in their presence to your evil tempers, your love of scandal, your lightness of speech; who neither sympathize with their troubles, nor accustom them to feel for yours; who lead your selfish, self-indulgent lives apart from your children's hearts and interests, and then—raise a great outcry because these very sons and daughters grow up selfish and heartless likewise; frivolous girls, libertine sons, whose god is the desire of the moment, whose heaven the gratification of their earthly passions?

Better and nobler and greater a thousand times the little, hardworked, overtired sister in a London *crèche* than the fashionable mother of a dozen handsome, spoilt, neglected children.

Besides, what a fund of amusement there is in the little people if we only look for it! What wonderful ideas, quaint delusions, and comical conceits they have of their own! and how little we know about them when we come to consider the matter! Many grown-up men and women have laughed and cried over "Tom Brown's School Days," "Alone in London," "Misunderstood," and other children's stories, bearing on their face the impress of being drawn from life; and yet these very people may have children or nephews and nieces of their own, living books of whose contents they know nothing beyond the mere lettering of the title-page.

Have you ever read De Quincey's autobiography? and, if so, did you not thoroughly enjoy the record of his childish days, of the imaginary kingdoms (I forget their names now) over which he and his brother reigned, of the trouble his kingdom gave him, of the anxiety he used to suffer about his subjects; and the real sorrow of heart and indignation he underwent when his brother insisted that, as the territories adjoined and the future opium-eater was not so able a monarch as himself, the former's kingdom should be made to pay tribute and be subject to his own. Poor little De Quincey! One feels sorry for the afterwards world-famed essayist when one reads of his childish grief, his tears and perplexity respecting this purely aerial royalty. Yet in our own lives we had equally imaginary secrets which caused us as much thought, and even more delight and amusement than De Quincey's kingdom gave him.

How utterly absurd it seems now to look back on our childish fancies so long passed away into oblivion! Nay, not oblivion; for am I not recalling them now, and laughing to myself at the quaintly merry conceits?

"Visions of childhood! Stay, oh! stay!

Ye were so sweet and mild!

And distant voices seem to say,

'It cannot be! They pass away!

Other themes demand thy lay;

Thou art no more a child.'

But ah! it is the memory of those visions which makes me gentle with children's freaks and fancies nowadays; for were not ours as nonsensical as they were possible to be, and yet productive of a wonderful amount of pleasure? Where is the good in destroying infantine delusions, and stamping down

whimsical air castles with the stern foot of middle-aged common-sense, when the doing so is no benefit to ourselves, and inflicts real pain and loss on the roughly awakened little dreamers?

I do love to see children happy; and as "where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise," I would leave the little people to that bliss which, as L. E. L. says, "life never knows again." One cannot be a child long. Strive as one may, the charmed dream is but too soon over; wherefore let it be made as happy as it may. Don't frown at Dick because he comes tumbling into the room, dancing and singing like a wild creature. Don't put Susie down when she says silly, childish things. Don't snub Harry with "never mind—don't tease me" when he asks a question; or that worst of aggravating answers to a child, "Oh! you couldn't understand if I did tell you." Don't slap Baby's meddling little fingers if they chance to tear your lace or crumple your collars. Don't in fact fret and fume because a lively, healthy, intelligent child won't move as slowly, sit as still, and keep as quiet as a weary, middle-aged person in delicate health. There may come a day—God avert it from you—when you will listen vainly for the bounding step and boisterous laugh; when you will strain your eyes to see the merry smile and saucy glance which you rebuked before; when the little, restless body will lie still enough, never to move or rise again until the sounding of the great trump.

Even putting death aside, we lose our children soon enough. They go to school, or they grow up and there is an end of them, their racket, their nonsense, their innocent fun, and short-lived sadness.

"We see the nursery windows
Wide open to the air;
But the faces of the children
They are no longer there.
They walk not under the lincens,
They play not in the hall;
But shadow and silence and sadness
Are hanging over all.
The birds sing in the branches
With sweet, familiar tone;
But the voices of the children
Will be heard in dreams alone."

"In dreams alone!" Longfellow must pardon me for altering the tense in those well-loved lines of his, for I am feeling the truth of them very keenly to-day. Even my school-boy brother has gone away now. The little table at my side is neat and tidy again.

The house is very quiet. There is no noise of echoing laughter, no disturbance of restless feet; and I, lying at peace on my sofa, think of the boy's bright face, till it brings with it a host of others, bright and beaming with the cloudless sunshine of eternal childhood. Little hands clasp mine, little heads nestle on my breast, little feet patter round my sofa. There is a buzz of childish voices in the air, and then it dies away, drowned in the clamour of a street organ at the corner, and I open my eyes and turn fretfully from the noise. Quiet is very comfortable, after all; and where children are, quietness is not.

gas, was solid and of considerable weight. I shall quote from memory the beginning of the lecture.

"This Engine is intended for visiting the various planets and fixed stars. I have found the centre of gravity of the machine, which is easily done by the principles of mechanics; the problem, therefore, is to avert the force of the earth's gravitation from this point, and bring to bear on it instead, the attraction of that planet which I wish to visit. When I have made this discovery, which I have many hopes of doing, I shall be able in a few hours to reach the most distant point of our planetary system. But lest you may think that the Engine would be dashed to pieces by the momentum it has gained before I reach the planet, the gravitation of this world will be allowed to resume its force, which will counteract the great motion, and I shall descend slowly to the ground."

Not one of his audience understood the remainder of his lecture, as it was altogether taken up with the most intricate calculations, which I have no doubt were quite correct, supposing the philosophers to have solved the original problem. At the close, two-thirds of his hearers left thinking he was a very great man. The remainder, I am afraid, thought he was a very crazed one. Some months after this, I was told by an acquaintance that Jacobs had at last made his great discovery. I confess I was a little startled when I heard this. The recent discoveries of science, the philosopher's undoubted ability, and the fact that he had never formerly announced any discovery nor made any actual professions which he did not fulfil, all served to stagger me. A little reflection, however, convinced me of the absurdity of the thing.

It was announced that the philosopher would make his first voyage in a few days. I was very much alarmed when I heard that Jacobs had arranged that the Engine should be taken to the top of some very high scaffolding connected with a public building in course of erection; and that, when he had taken his seat in the car, it should be pushed off. I went and remonstrated with him, and said that the Engine would rise equally well from the ground. But it was in vain. He assured me that the dust or damp that might be on the ground would alter the centre of gravity, and that this would upset all his calculations. I

reasoned with him for a long time; but it was to no purpose. He said his Planetary Engine must be pushed off from some height, and offered to show me calculations which would prove the evil effects the ground would have; in fact, that so delicate was the apparatus, it would not rise from the surface of the earth at all.

After leaving him, I went to the young architect who had charge of the building from which Jacobs was going to commit suicide. To my astonishment, I found that he had assented to all the philosopher's plans.

"Why, if he is wrong, the sooner he finds it out the better," was the answer I got to my remonstrances. "Besides," he continued, "who knows but he may rise, after all? Dr. Jacobs is such a very clever man, I should not be surprised if he did."

I thought I had done all that I could, and hoped that Dr. Jacobs would alter his mind before the day arrived on which his experiment was to take place. He did not, however; and on going to the place at the hour he had fixed, I found an immense crowd assembled to witness the ascent of the Engine. The credulity of the greater part of these people was astonishing.

"You'll see the philosopher go up like a sky-rocket," I heard a mechanic say to his companion.

"This discovery brings honour to this town," remarked a very respectable tradesman.

"Did you hear which of the stars he's going to?" asked a female of some of the spectators.

What made me wonder most was that not one appeared to have a sense of the danger to which Jacobs was exposing himself. If there were any who understood that he would certainly be dashed to pieces, they were not, as far as I saw, among the crowd. At last the Planetary Engine arrived, and was partly carried and partly pulled by ropes to the top of the scaffolding. The doctor made his appearance, and was greeted with loud shouts by the crowd. A good deal of bantering, as was natural, took place.

"Don't lose the way coming home."

"Bring back one of the inhabitants," &c.

The doctor entered the car, and the machine was brought to the very edge of the scaffold. When it was about to be pushed off I closed my eyes. A moment afterwards I heard a loud crash: the machine

was dashed to pieces. This was followed by great cheering on the part of the crowd. I opened my eyes. The people were shouting and looking upwards. Could it be that the philosopher was actually ascending? I looked up, and there he was indeed in mid-air, but suspended by a rope which was fastened round his waist. He was hanging a few feet from the place from which he had been pushed off, and was at once dragged up. A rope had been slipped round him unobserved, by the men who had assisted him with his Engine, and who had never intended that he should run the risk of killing himself. When I saw him shortly afterwards, I censured him very strongly for his foolishness in risking his life. He was unconvinced, however.

"Of course," he said, "I know it was for what they thought my good that they put that rope round me, but it completely disturbed the centre of gravity. Had they left me to myself, I should now be in Saturn."

The Planetary Engine, to my joy, was smashed to pieces, and he never attempted to make another, but spent the remainder of his life in the eager but vain pursuit after more harmless discoveries.

OUR DAUGHTER PATTY.

CHAPTER I.

PATTY was not our only child—there was Elizabeth; she was a good deal older than Patty. Let me see—there was seven years between them, I think—yes, Elizabeth and Bob Brown were of an age, and Bob was just seven-and-twenty.

I can remember, as if it was yesterday, when I come to think, how Jane Brown used to set up her Bob against my Elizabeth. Of course Bob's an exception, but I must say, as a rule, I don't like to see such very fat babies; they never turn out so healthy, to my mind. At all events, even if Elizabeth was not so lusty as Bob, I'm sure Patty was a finer child, and Mrs. Brown herself admits she wouldn't wish to see a stouter, bonnier babe than my Patty was at six months.

How surprised they all were. Why, Mrs. Taylor wouldn't believe it, and said father was joking when he told her what a rare Christmas-box he'd had. Jane Brown and the Hollands came round after church, and said they'd come to make sure, not being able

to credit their ears. Father made them stay, I recollect, and drink my health and baby's in a bottle of that wine he got from Smith's sale. I heard them laughing and talking in the little parlour at the back of the shop quite plainly; and father was that merry, he might have been six-and-twenty instead of six-and-forty. Dear, dear! it seems but the other day, instead of twenty years and more ago.

Patty must have been about sixteen (for I remember she'd just gone into bonnets for Sundays) at the time father and I retired. You see, we'd no sons to leave the business to. Father was getting on in years, and being pretty well to do (for stationery's a paying trade when one knows how to work it), we sold up the stock and goodwill, and settled down quietly in Nelson-street.

It wanted about three weeks to Patty's twentieth birthday—I know this because it was just a year since Bob Brown came home and set up in business for himself, and Mrs. Brown had just been in talking to me about it. Elizabeth was helping me stone raisins for the pudding, for I always make mine two or three weeks before it's wanted, and have done ever since I kept house. Father was looking over the paper and smoking his pipe: that was the one thing my husband and me ever had words about, that everlasting smoking. There wasn't a place in the house free from the smell of it, except, perhaps, the front parlour. I was determined no pipes should come there; let them do what they liked with the rest, that one room should be kept genteel. Well, I was just thinking of calling Patty to come and do her share of the raisins, when she came running into the room.

Father looked up and said—

"What's the row now, Patty?"

I said—

"Get a knife, love, and come and help us."

Elizabeth said—

"Goodness, Patty, do try if you can be a little less boisterous; and shut the door after you, do."

But Patty heard none of us.

"Look here, Lizzie," she cried; "here's a note for you. Mrs. Brown's Mary's just left it. I'm sure it's to ask us there. It just looks like an invitation. Oh, do be quick and open it. Or let me, your fingers are so sticky."

And she tore off the envelope. Patty

always was just like that, so quick and impulsive; and although I shouldn't be the one to say it, perhaps I don't think you'd meet a livelier — no, nor a prettier girl either — than our Patty in a day's walk. Father used to say she was like me in the days when he first knew me, but that was just like his nonsense.

"Well, I'm sure — I think you might let me open my own letters," said Elizabeth.

"Oh, it is! What fun! Emmy says they're going to dance, too. Do you think they'll take up the carpet, ma?" cried Patty.

"Now, how can I tell, Patty?" said I. "I've heard it said by some that it does a carpet no harm to dance upon it, though I must say I shouldn't like to see a lot of folks tramping about on my best Brussels."

"When is it to be, Patty? Come here and tell me all about it," said father.

"Is it to be full dress, should you think?" asked Elizabeth; and I could see quite well that she liked the notion of a little outing almost as well as her sister.

"It's next Wednesday, four days off. How I wish it was to-morrow."

"For shame, Patty! to-morrow's Sunday," said Elizabeth.

Father laughed and said —

"How fond these young people are of kicking up their heels a bit. Well, well, I suppose our day's over. I can remember, though, when we could caper about with the best of 'em. Eh, mother?"

"You old darling! I wish you were going with us," cried Patty, kissing him.

"I wonder," said I, "if Mrs. Brown 'll wear her puce satin. She had it done up fresh last winter for the Hollands', and it looked almost as good as new again."

And I began telling the girls of the first time ever Mrs. Brown put on that gown — it was at Emmy's christening; and of how she must have had that dress seventeen years at the very least, for she got it at the same time as I bought my liver-coloured silk, and that was done for, as they knew, more than a year ago.

But Patty was too excited to listen to anything.

"I wonder who'll be there? Do you think they'll ask the Greens? The Hollands are sure to be invited, I should think. I say, Lizzie, what 'll you wear?"

It was rather rude of Patty to interrupt me; but I never minded Patty much, she

had such pretty ways with her. One couldn't be vexed with her long ever, somehow. I insisted, though, that she should put on her print apron, and come to the raisins.

Said Elizabeth —

"I'm not sure yet whether I shall be able to go at all."

"Lor! why not?" cried Patty.

"Never mind, Patty, Liz is only trying to frighten you a bit. Aint you now, Liz?" said father.

"Mrs. Brown 'll be very much put about if you don't go, after her preparing the supper and all," said I; and I knew she would, too; there's nothing so aggravating as to reckon on folks and get ready for them, and then for them not to come.

"Well, you see, Wednesday's church night, and I don't know that I should like to miss it after Mr. Canter asking us so nicely to come."

"I like that. What do you call a nice way, Lizzie? Look here, father, he entreated us last Sunday to come on Wednesday evenings, that 'the church mightn't be empty.' That was a funny reason to give from the pulpit, wasn't it now?"

"Patty, Patty," I said, "how can you let your tongue run so fast?"

"Well, but ma, we did go, you know, last Wednesday — Lizzie persuaded me, so I went to help fill up the church; and oh! how I wished I could divide myself into a hundred, to people some of those empty pews. Why, pa, there was only me and Liz and two old women. I know they were thinking of coats and flannel petticoats, and not of Canter the eloquent, or even the empty church — oh! and I forgot there was one old man who fell fast asleep, and had to be waked up when it was time to go home; and three children who wandered in by mistake, and amused themselves by climbing up into the seats, and then slipping off them again with a great bang, till they had to be turned out."

I should have reproved Patty, for I can't abide such things being made a jest of; but father was laughing, and said —

"Well done, little Patty; and what did Canter say to his scanty flock?"

Elizabeth made the remark —

"I suppose, then, Bob Brown and those girls in the choir count for nothing?"

I could see, by the way she said it, that Elizabeth was getting vexed, but Patty would go on.

"Well, there's something wrong somewhere or other. Either there should be no service on Wednesday evenings, or else the parsons should make it attractive enough to get folks to come. It's a perfect farce to light up a church and preach for half an hour to Liz and me and Bob Brown."

Father was evidently enjoying it all.

"I find, mostly," said he, "two sermons a Sabbath quite enough for my digestive organs in one week; and I suppose other folks are of the same opinion."

"Well," said Patty, thoughtlessly, "I can tell you this, I won't make one of the triplet another Wednesday. It nearly drove me melancholy mad to see that great empty church, and to hear Mr. Canter ranting away there."

"Patty," cried Elizabeth, "you wicked girl! Ma, how can you let her be so profane?"

I don't wonder at Elizabeth being shocked; for, setting aside the thoughtlessness, not to say irreverence, of Patty's speech, Elizabeth thought a deal of Mr. Canter. He certainly seemed a most enlightened young man. Since he'd come to be Mr. Jones's curate, Elizabeth had taken a class at the Sunday-school and a district besides. A very eloquent way with the ladies had Mr. Canter. I thought it was high time I interfered to stop the foolish child; therefore I said, with a look at my husband—and he always said I could look daggers when I liked—

"Father, I wonder at your encouraging Patty to speak like that. Patty, I cannot and will not allow you to make such remarks in my presence. I must say I think, if a deep-read scholar like our Mr. Jones thinks it well to have service of a Wednesday evening, it's not for such as you to set up your opinion against his."

"Yes, but ma, Mr. Jones doesn't come himself not once in six months. One 'ud think, if he cared much about it, he wouldn't let Mr. Canter have it all his own way."

"There, there, Patty, that's quite enough. Don't begin to argue, for goodness' sake," I said. "Do live and let live. Let them that like go to church of a Wednesday. I can't go, for it's ironing night, and I must see to the clothes. And as to wasting the gas, why it seems a pity, but that's their own look-out."

The raisins were finished, and I had been siding up the pips and dirty knives while I spoke; so now I took them in my hand, and

went to see if the girl had got the suet ready. I just heard my husband say as I closed the door—

"My word, Patty, if you haven't set the cat among the pigeons."

I was away some time, for I had to look after several little things—get the rest of the fruit and the apples and what not for the pudding.

I heard Patty's voice as I came along the passage, and when I got into the parlour there she was perched on her father's knee, talking away at a fine rate.

"Hallo, mother!" cried he, "you're just in time. There's bribery and corruption going on. Here's Patty trying to creep up her old father's sleeve. Wants me to buy her no end of fal-lals for this party."

"I should have thought her white muslin would have been quite sufficient, if it was washed and got up with new ribbons," said Elizabeth.

She was never one for spending much, wasn't Elizabeth.

"Now then, Liz, do hold your tongue; arn't I asking for you, too? Look here, ma, I'm tired to death of that muslin. I've worn it I don't know how many times; and besides, it's so awfully old-fashioned. I know you wouldn't like your girls to look dowdy frights, and get no partners all the night; and the Holland and Smith girls 'ul be dressed up to the eyes. I know they will."

"What d'ye say, missis? I think we'll have to get 'em a dress apiece. Liz and our Patty mustn't look——"

"I knew he would, old pet!" cried Patty, throwing her arms round his neck and well-nigh choking him; and then she came running to me. "Now, ma, what colour shall it be? Blue suits me best, but then Liz can't wear anything but red."

"Well," said I, "I don't know what to say. I'm afraid it's a piece of extravagance. When I was a girl, I used to make a white muslin last me for years, and mother never thought of buying me such quantities of ribbons as girls want nowadays."

To tell the truth, I wasn't ill-pleased that they should have new gowns; for, after all, muslin doesn't look much after it's once been washed, and I knew, as Patty said, the Hollands and Smiths would be got up no end.

"Ah, some people can afford to wear anything, and look well in it, too," said

Patty, kissing me in her pretty, coaxing way.

"Well, it didn't look amiss, with the skirt tucked up to the very waist, and a pink sash tied with long ends behind—as father can tell you if he will. Goodness me! How many years ago was that? Why, you wore it, Elizabeth, and Patty after you, when you were little trots no higher than this table. I believe I have it to this day, if I only knew where to look for it."

"Aye, we weren't a bad-looking couple when we started life, old lady. Well, and which of the young fellows are you going to set your cap at, Patty? Is it to be Bob Brown?"

"Bob Brown!" said Patty, tossing her head scornfully—"a noodle like that! No, indeed."

"Take care what you're about, Patty. There's many a worse than Bob," said father, "and I'm afraid he's pretty far gone. You shouldn't encourage him if you don't like him."

"What stuff you are putting in the child's head, father," said I.

"I encourage him!" I saw that Patty's cheeks were very red. "Great big stupid! I can't bear him. Of course I can't tell him so; neither can I tell him not to walk home from church with us, and I must answer him when he speaks to me. But encourage him! I don't think anything on earth would induce me to marry Bob Brown."

"My goodness! perhaps you'd better wait till he asks you," said Elizabeth.

I must say I didn't see any occasion for Patty's saying all she did. I always thought Bob Brown a very nice, steady young man, and getting on very well in his business, too. Why Patty should be so dead set against him, I can't tell. There never was any accounting for Patty's likes and dislikes.

I think Patty and Elizabeth would have had words, for Patty wasn't one to stand being snubbed, only Jane Thompson came in at that moment to ask if they were going to the Browns'. She told us she and her brother were going. She understood it was to be quite a grand affair. Emmy had been into their house that morning to ask if they knew of a man to play the piano, so she knew all about it. More than twenty people had been invited. Such a fuss and to-do. A woman to come and help cook the supper

—the carpet up in the back parlour—supper to be in the best bed-room, and I don't know what all. Our Patty was wild with excitement, and father remarked that "old Brown wasn't one to spoil a thing for a pen'orth of paint."

For my part, I was glad Jane Brown had it all to do and not me. I don't hold with one's turning the house out of windows just for one night's junket. I can manage a few folks to tea, with a round game of cards after, and a bit of hot supper. No one better. But as for taking the carpets up, and, as I said before, turning the house topsyturvy, I wouldn't do it for any one.

OUR DAUGHTER PATTY.

CHAPTER II.

[T'S well I got my puddings done and out of the way that Saturday, for Elizabeth and Patty were that busy with their dresses and one thing and another that not a finger could they put to anything else till after the party was over. Indeed, Patty wheedled

me into helping them too, and there was such a sewing up of breadths, hemming of flounces, trying on and fixing of ribbons as never was. Elizabeth didn't mention again about the Wednesday evening service, but went to work with such a will, I couldn't help thinking she was nearly as pleased with the thoughts of the finery and bit of dancing as our Patty.

Wednesday came, and with it came the frost—a right down hard frost it was, too. I remember it well, for that very day Anne, our servant girl, went and shoved her hand right through the back kitchen window as she was trying to open it to let out the smell of some fat she'd burnt in the oven, and it was three weeks before ever we could get it mended, because it froze so hard the man said it would be useless to put it in. As I said to father at the time, "It's a very good job it wasn't one of the bed-room windows, or even the parlour"—I don't know whatever we should have done if it had been.

Well, I had a bit of fire lighted in the girls' room, it was so cold I recollect. Then we had an early cup of tea together—for they were to be there by seven—and after that came the dressing. That was a business indeed—Patty was so hard to please, she did her hair over twice before it would suit her.

There had come that afternoon a lovely white chrysanthemum and some fern leaves from Bob Brown for Patty, and very kind and friendly I thought it of Bob. But Patty said she wouldn't wear it; then she tried it in her hair, and it looked that nice she hadn't the heart to take it out again, so she left it there after all.

The last pin was stuck in at last, and I must say the dresses looked beautiful.

Of course it's not for me to make the remark, but any one else would have said the same—that our Patty looked a perfect picture, with her blue ribbons and fan and gloves, for she would have all complete; and Elizabeth didn't look amiss neither, in rose colour. The frocks were alike, with just the different ribbons, and then they came downstairs for father to see.

"By George, Patty!" he cried, as soon as he caught sight of her, "you're going to make a hole in somebody's heart to-night."

"I'm going to make two or three holes in two or three people's hearts," said my saucy Patty.

And then father turned to look at Elizabeth.

"Well, there'll be worse-looking girls in the room than ours, mother," he said, after he'd taken a good look.

There's no need for me to say I thought so too. But oh! how I wish you could have seen Patty yourselves.

Anne was ready waiting, and it was ten minutes past seven; so we pinned up their dresses, wrapped them up well, and packed them off.

Father and I sat down to a game of *bélique*. Many a time I lost my "double *bélique*" and broke into my "quint" thinking of how the girls were getting on. We gave it up at last, and I got father his glass of grog, and set the things ready and made some coffee for them, thinking it 'ud warm them a bit before going to bed.

It got on to twelve o'clock. I sent Anne to bring them home. Father fell fast asleep, and I think I must have gone off a bit myself, for all at once I was awakened by the knock at the door. I went to open it, and found Anne outside by herself. She said Mr. Bob Brown had sent her back, and said he'd see the young ladies safe home. It was much too early—they'd only just finished supper.

Of course Anne was full of the grand doings; she'd never seen such an upset in her life before. After I'd stayed talking to her a bit, I sent her to bed and went back to the parlour. Father was that sound asleep he'd never once awoke, and he was snoring awful.

I settled myself for a doze, and the next thing I remembered was a fearful noise, that seemed to be close to my ear. There was father rubbing his eyes.

"I say, mother, there they are. What a row they are making, to be sure."

He might well say that; they were thumping and shaking the door fit to bring it down.

I ran to let them in. Bob Brown was standing on the steps with his hand up, just ready to begin knocking again.

"Oh! how d'ye do, Mrs. Gibson? Been asleep? I hope we've not frightened you. Couldn't make any one hear," said he, shaking hands with me.

"I'm sorry we've kept you so late, mother," said Elizabeth, coming in. "We've had such a pleasant evening."

And then I saw Patty standing at the

foot of the steps talking to a tall young man.

I was telling Bob I hoped his mother wouldn't be very much put about with all this fuss to-morrow.

The young man seemed to be asking Patty for something, and she didn't seem to want to give it him. At last I saw her raise her hand and pull out the flower from her hair. He took it, and, if my eyes didn't deceive me, he kissed it, and said something that made Patty laugh. I called out—

"Come, come, Patty; don't stand out there in the cold."

Then there was a shaking of hands all round, and Patty ran in. The young man called after her—

"Mind you don't forget to-morrow, Miss Patty."

And Patty called back—

"I'm not likely to, Mr. Darrel."

When we got into the parlour Patty threw herself into a chair.

"Oh, we have had such fun," she cried. "I never enjoyed myself so much in my life."

"Well, and who was there? Come, tell us all about it," said father.

Patty rattled away while I poured out the coffee, and Elizabeth told me what they had for supper, what every one did, and what they had on. By the way, Mrs. Brown did wear her puce satin. I said she would.

I was just telling Elizabeth how in my young days girls would no more have thought of waltzing, no, nor of polking neither, than of flying, when I overheard Patty say—

"And then Mr. Canter came in after church; and oh, papa, you should have seen Miss Slyboots there flirting away with him."

"It's good to hear you talking of flirting, after the way you were carrying on with that young Mr. Darrel," said Elizabeth.

"Now we shall have it all. Fire away, Liz," cried father.

"Who's Mr. Darrel?" said I. For it just struck me that was the very name of the young man that had brought Patty home.

"Oh, he's one of Bob Brown's grand London friends, come down to stop with them a bit. Such a jolly fellow; dances splendidly," said Patty.

"Do you know, ma, she actually danced three times running with him. Even Mr. Canter remarked upon it," said Elizabeth.

"He'll have something more to remark upon to-morrow, for Emmy and he are coming to call for me. Mr. Darrel's going to teach me to skate, mamma."

"To what?" cried I. "Skate! My gracious, what ever will the girls be up to next, I wonder. When I was young—"

But Patty interrupted me.

"Why, ma, wherever's the harm? Mr. Darrel says it's quite the fashion. All the first ladies in the land skate. Emmy's learnt; and, after all, isn't physical exercise good for one every way?"

"Well, I never!" said Elizabeth, and I could see she was quite shocked; and for the matter of that, so was I.

"Upon my word," I said, "I don't know what the world's coming to. I expect, father, the next thing they'll be for figuring away on those bicycle things, and calling it physical exercise. I can tell you this, Patty, it won't be of my free will you go making a show of yourself on the ice."

"A very nice figure you'll cut there. It'll be one person's work to pick you up again each time you tumble," said father. "But come along, lassies—it's after two o'clock, let's get to bed. Don't look so glum, Patty, my girl; me and the missis 'll sleep on it, and may be you'll be able to distinguish yourself after all. But where are the skates coming from?"

"Oh, Emmy's going to manage all that," answered Patty.

So we did talk it all over, and next morning Patty coaxed.

Then Emmy and Mr. Darrel came—such a nice-spoken, gentlemanly young man I thought him. When he came to talk and tell me how his sister skated, and all the quality, I began to think that perhaps it was as he said—only prejudice, and I'd soon get used to the notion.

Well, Patty went, and Mr. Darrel told me not to make myself uneasy; he'd see no harm came to her.

After that we heard nothing but what fun it was, and what tumbles she'd had; and each day they came for her, and Patty could talk of nothing else but skating, and outside edges, and such-like.

Elizabeth often had words with Patty about it, and sometimes I had my own misgivings; but the child seemed so happy, I hadn't the heart to stop it.

At first Mr. Darrel's name was never off Patty's lips. It was always Mr. Darrel says

this, and Mr. Darrel says that; but afterwards I noticed that she hardly ever spoke of him, and from being so merry and light-hearted she would sometimes sit for ever so long doing nothing—only thinking; then, all at once begin laughing and chattering and dancing about the house, gay as any bird.

I said nothing, but perhaps thought the more.

Father said he "smelt a rat;" and I suppose he meant Mr. Darrel, for he used to tease Patty about him above a bit.

We heard somehow that Mr. Darrel was an architect: he'd been pupil to some one, I forget the name, but I think it began with an H. However, that's neither here nor there. I believe he was just about to begin business on his own account in London. A fine thing I thought it for Patty to have attentions paid her by a real gentleman such as he.

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

SEEKING FOR LIGHT.

THE gas we are going to burn to-night is being made far down in what used to be Fulham Marshes. The muddy river runs close by; old Battersea Church is just opposite; and a little creek filled with black barges comes close up to several smoking factories that seem to be in an incipient state of conflagration; while, just at hand, are several Brobdingnagian pill-boxes, which a closer inspection shows to be huge gasometers, running up and down between pillars of handsome Corinthian architecture, with fluting and florid capital complete. It is a vast place this, many acres in extent.

There are buildings of brick, railways, round towers of iron, engine-houses, engineers' shops, stores, offices, warehouses, mountains of coal, and extinct volcanoes of coke; and, above all, a laboratory.

We stand first by the creek wherein lie barges of coal—Newcastle; and close by are trucks of that hard, shining mineral known as Cannel. Blackened men are busily filling an iron truck with iron scoops or shovels, bent of handle, and resembling in shape the ordinary spade of a pack of cards. The truck is filled, hooked on to bands, "whizz" go engine and wheel, and the iron truck flies aloft fifty feet, to a railway, upon a scaffolding, running round each retort house, side by side with which are the coal stores. The little iron waggon is checked over a hole, a lever is touched, the bottom drops, and the freight of coals runs down a shoot into the stores. To follow the coal is the next step, but one descends by ladder, and reaches a smoke-filled building, where the heat is fearful; and glistening in the glare of smoky light, and amid the clangour of iron upon iron, and the occasional loud

report of an open retort, men are hurrying about naked to the waist, their skin blackened with smoke, and mapped out, back and breast, with rivulets of perspiration streaming down.

Facing us there is a wall of brick, studded with what seem to be little iron doors—the retorts, these, of fire-clay, about two feet across, and twenty-seven feet or so in length.

These retorts run right through to the other side of the building, and have a lid, or door, at each end; and, while we look on here, the same process is going on beyond the glowing, roaring furnace that heats the retorts.

"Bang!" A nude fellow has opened the door of a retort—a door cemented with lime and clay to make it air-tight, and then screwed up. The noise was caused by the air, and there is a rush out of flame and smoke, while the face is scorched by the contents of glowing coke. A long iron rake is introduced, and the orange-tinted coke is drawn out, to fall down through a hole to a floor beneath, where men are at work quenching it with water, and shovelling it aside for sale. But the retort, one of hundreds, is now empty, and three men prepare to fill it with a giant marrow-spoon, or scoop of iron, twelve or fourteen feet long, and having a cross handle like an old-fashioned spade.

The scoop is soon filled, one man takes hold of the T-shaped handle, the other two, after giving a signal to the men on the other side by rapping the floor with an iron bar, pass the said bar beneath the scoop, and raise it about the middle, lifting it level with the oven-like retort-mouth, when, whish! in an instant it is run in nearly to the cross-handle, which the holder gives a twist, and the coal is left in the retort. This process is repeated several times, when the retort is sealed up at either end, and exposed to raging heat for six hours, at the end of which time the gas, tar, and ammonia have passed off, and the process is repeated.

Leaving the blackened workers—men who earn their thirty-six or thirty-eight shillings per week, and forming part of a staff, eleven hundred strong in winter, though now less than half—we pass the engines pumping and sucking gas, and the other products of the coal, to the various receptacles. This, a huge iron tank of gas tar, with pipe and pump to run it into barges waiting to bear it

away; that, another tank, for ammoniacal liquor; while the gas passes first to a series of round towers of iron, filled with coke, and, going through these, it leaves behind a portion of its impurity before reaching the great square box-like purifiers, which are charged with a mixture of lime and per-oxide of iron or bog ore. This gives the finishing cleansing to the vapour, which then reaches one of the vast gasometers, some of which, when full, tower sixty feet or one hundred feet above one's head, while others, sunk in emptiness in their wells, are level with the ground and invite a walk over.

Next, one reaches a huge store of several floors covered with heaps of brownish-red earth—the per-oxide this, being exposed to the air to revivify it after cleansing gas in the purifiers; and then one is led into a building where, upon a dial, a delicately-poised index-hand marks the pressure of the gas flowing from the Imperial Gas Company's works to illumine London. In front are three wheels for turning on the gas, wheels like those on a steamboat or ship: The index now stands at 4, which is the usual day pressure, for the sun is yet high in the heavens; but come on dusk, and then darkness, more and more gas will be turned on, and the amount registered hour by hour in the book kept for the purpose.

In the laboratory delicate tests are going on, the gas passing through glass domes wherein hang pieces of paper dipped in solution of lead. There are glass ball tests for sulphur. And, again, here the flame is photographed, and its qualities printed off and preserved, like the test papers, in a register. But not yet is the vapour tortured enough. Its flame has to be measured, and its illuminating power at a certain pressure. Then delicate scales are brought into operation, and photometers, wherein, in darkness, so many grains of sperm candle are burned against so many inches of gas, and the illuminating powers of the gas to-day, yesterday, any day, recorded, as compared with the light of the candle.

Out again once more into the vast yard, where coke is piled in a mountain, and the loud boom of the opened retorts comes from the smoking windows of the great houses, from one of which, a great, muscular, blackened man comes to cool himself, and wipe away the streaming sweat.

"Cold, sir—ketch cold? No; we're used to it."

OUR DAUGHTER PATTY.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS DAY came at last. I think I shall never forget that day as long as I live. No, not if it be a hundred years.

And you'll say I've cause to remember it when you've heard all.

It was Patty's birthday as well. We'd all given her some little present; and, besides, there'd come for her by post a small box, registered. We were all so anxious to see what was inside it that Patty laughed and said she wouldn't open it till after breakfast, as an exercise for our patience—but she couldn't wait herself. I knew she couldn't when she said it. So she cut the string and undid the cover, and there was a lovely little bunch of forgets-me-nots. Wherever they could have come from, with the frost on the ground, passes me. In the middle of them lay a tiny hoop of pearls, tied with a bit of white ribbon.

Well, they all set to work wondering where it could have come from.

Father guessed Bob Brown. Whatever put that thought in his head, I can't think—it seemed so unlike Bob; and I could see Patty thought the same.

Inside the ring, when Patty turned it about, she saw engraven the words, "God be with you."

I had my own notions about the sender, and I know Patty was thinking of the same person.

They all agreed it was a beautiful present. I doubted if Patty ought to keep it, and so did Elizabeth. But then, as Patty said, "How was she to send it back when she didn't know where it came from?" Father advised her to "stick to it, no matter what any one said."

I'd always made it a rule to go to church on Christmas morning. Of course I looked to my pudding myself, and saw that the turkey was put down; for one never knows where one is if one leaves everything to the girl. Then Patty and Elizabeth would lay the cloth and set out the dessert; for we always had a little feast on Christmas Day, and had had ever since we'd been married.

However, I never let these things hinder us from going to church. I couldn't abide folks to say that me or my girls stayed at

home to cook the dinner, like some I could mention.

We'd a very good sermon from Mr. Jones. I can't just recollect the text, but I remember thinking it very suitable to the day.

After church, the Browns and Mr. Darrel walked home with us, and they were all joking and wishing Patty many happy returns of the day; and Patty was telling them of all the presents she'd had, but I didn't hear her say a word of the ring.

Patty had got me to ask them all to tea that night, as it was her birthday. I remember Elizabeth didn't approve of it; but I saw no harm in it, as Patty said her birthday only came once a year, and it wasn't her fault that it fell on a Christmas Day.

You see, Elizabeth held that Christmas should be kept more holy even than Sunday; Father and Patty held that it should be a day of rejoicing; and they had a great many words on the subject. Father got angry at last, and said he'd do what he liked in his own house. I'm sorry to say he said, too, "Confound Mr. Canter," and he wished he was at the bottom of the Red Sea, for he was making Elizabeth as big a prig as himself.

Elizabeth only looked at him, sniffed, and walked out of the room.

I was sorry Elizabeth should have had such a setting down; however, they soon made it up again—father was never one to bear malice for long.

The dinner went off splendidly. I will say this for Anne, she could manage a roast, with a little looking after, as well as any girl I ever had. The turkey was done to a turn, and the pudding was first-rate. Patty and father together kept us laughing the whole time, they were that droll, and made such quaint remarks. Then Patty would have Anne up, I remember, to drink her health, and it was all we could do to get Anne to take the wine. She said she was sure it would get into her head, not being used to it; but she took it at last, and another glass as well, and seemed just the same afterwards, so I suppose use is not always second nature.

Well, we'd finished dinner and had just drawn our chairs up round the fire, when there came a knock at the door.

"That'll be the Browns for me," said Patty.

Father got up and went to open the door for them.

"My gracious! you're never going skating to-day," cried Elizabeth.

"Yes I am," said Patty. "Why not? And I want you and father to come and see me, mother."

"But Patty, to-day of all days in the year!" said Elizabeth. "Why, Mr. Canter says——"

"I don't care a button what Mr. Canter says; I'm going to enjoy myself on my birthday. Say you'll come and see me, mother."

Elizabeth looked huffed.

"I don't know what to say between you," said I. "It does seem hard that Patty can't have her little bit of fun. But then again, as Elizabeth says——"

I did not get to the end of my speech, for at that moment father and the Browns came in, and we had to welcome them all.

Patty was not long before she was downstairs again in her hat and jacket, and the last words she said to me, as she kissed me good-bye, were—

"Now mind you come, mother. I want you to see how beautifully I go along. You can't refuse me on my birthday, you know."

My heart misgave me all the time; whether, as Mr. Canter said, there was any harm in enjoying oneself of a Christmas Day, or whether it was Elizabeth's look—for she seemed quite put about—I don't know; but I felt quite "down in the mouth," as father would say.

I began thinking of the pictures I'd seen of Christmas-time in the olden days, "Bringing Home the Yule Log," and such-like. Folks seemed to be merry enough in them, yet those were called the "good old days."

Dear me! were all the happy-looking men and women who had laughed and danced, and sung so gaily in those pictures, were they all bad? They looked innocent enough, goodness knows, in their queer, old-fashioned gowns, every one of them laughing that heartily.

I'd always done what I could to enliven up Christmas Day ever since the girls were little ones, and so had my mother before me. I'd never thought it wrong until now. Perhaps we oughtn't to have a turkey at all, nor any plum pudding. Lor! fancy Christmas Day and no pudding. Father would

never agree to that, I know. But who knows? maybe Elizabeth 'ud be for proposing it next year.

If it is wrong to enjoy oneself, it must be just as bad to make a feast. Where ought one to draw the line?

I was getting distracted, when suddenly father wakened up. He'd been taking his forty winks.

"Now then, are you ready, missis?" said he. "We must be off, or Patty'll think we're not coming. I shouldn't like to dis-appoint the little lassie."

So Patty'd been coaxing her father too. Well, I wasn't altogether sorry. I was quite tired of sitting alone, for Elizabeth had gone out to carry a few little things to some of her poor people.

When we got to the park, I declare it was quite a pretty sight. There were several ladies—so venturesome as they seemed—skimming along the ice. When I was a girl—but there, I'd better get on.

We soon picked out Patty; she was going along at a fine rate, arm in arm with Mr. Darrel. I couldn't help thinking what a handsome couple they made. Bob Brown was close behind, with Emmy. Patty saw us, and waved her hand to us, and looked so delighted I felt quite glad we'd come. Then she began figuring away by herself, to show us what she could do.

Father got quite excited, and told me how he used to skate when he was a boy. He said he'd been a first-rate hand at it. Then he clapped his hands and shouted—

"Well done, Patty! Bravo! Well done!"

Bob and Mr. Darrel put their two heels together, and bent down and skated round in some queer fashion father said was called spread-eagle.

Father and me felt quite proud of our Patty, for we didn't see one girl there could do as well.

Close to where they were skating there was a big hole broken at the edge of the pond, and in it a couple of swans. Poor things! I felt quite sorry for them paddling about there; it's a great mercy they weren't frozen to death. Father said the hole had been made purposely for them. It passes me altogether how the folks managed to keep from slipping in. Many and many a time it made me tremble to see how close they went to the edge—such slippery stuff as ice is too.

After we'd watched a bit longer, I be-

thought me it was high time for us to be getting home, with the Browns coming to tea and all. I ought to be seeing after things.

I'd not been in more than half an hour, and was just coming downstairs with some silver and things in my hand, when there came a sort of hurried knock at the door. Anne was in the parlour, and she ran to open it. There was Emmy Brown standing at the top of the steps, looking so scared and queer. I put down the things I was carrying on the hall table, and went to her.

"Why, Emmy, what's the matter?" I said.

When she saw me she came running in to me.

"Oh, Mrs. Gibson! don't be frightened! Bob sent me to prepare you," cried she, and began sobbing.

I fell a trembling, I can't tell why; but I felt all of a flutter, and couldn't say a word.

Father, hearing the noise, came into the passage.

"What's up? Don't cry, Emmy, my dear. Is anything wrong?" said he.

"It's poor Patty, Mr. Gibson," sobbed Emmy.

My heart gave a great jump, and something came into my throat and nearly choked me.

"She's fallen on the ice and cut herself, and Bob sent me to tell you, that it mightn't scare you to see her. Oh! don't look like that, Mrs. Gibson."

"She's killed, I know she is," screamed I.

"No, no, she's not!" cried Emmy. "Bob says it's only the shock and the cold water."

"Come, come, old lady," said father, putting his arm about me, "don't take on so."

But I could tell quite well from his voice that he was just as much put about as I was. And then he reached up his hand for his hat, poor dear! forgetting that he had it on his head all the time.

"Where is she? I must go and bring our Patty home. Keep a good heart, mother, we won't be long."

"She's coming. They're bringing her in a cab," broke in Emmy. "Oh, and I forgot—Bob told me to tell you to have plenty of hot blankets ready, and perhaps hot water'll be wanted."

I hope it'll never be my lot in this world to live over again minutes like those we

spent waiting for our poor Patty to come home.

We went about getting things ready for our darling, and each of us thought in our hearts the worst, though we said what we could to cheer one another.

Anne set to work crying directly she heard it, and nothing I could say would stop her or get it out of her head that the child was drowned.

Even in the midst of my misery I couldn't help feeling glad Elizabeth wasn't at home, for I was sure she and Mr. Canter would say this was a judgment on us. I had even time to wonder if it could be. Old as I was, I felt an inclination to laugh, or scream, or something of that kind. But, there—enough of that dreadful time—I wasn't myself a bit.

At last the cab came slowly along the street, and stopped at our door. Shall I ever forget it? There I stood, shaking and trembling—for I couldn't move, all the use seemed to have gone out of my legs—expecting to see I don't know what; while father went down and opened the cab door.

Bob Brown called out—

"There's nothing to be afraid of, Mrs. Gibson! The doctor says she'll be all right in a day or two. Stunned with the fall you know, Mr. Gibson. Here, let me get out first. Gently—there, now."

I can't tell you how thankful I was to hear him speak. It seemed so natural like.

I don't think father knew what he was about quite, for he seized Bob's hand, and began shaking it and asking him how he was, as if he hadn't seen him before that day.

There was some one else in the cab—Dr. Smith, I found out afterwards—and together they lifted out Patty. I felt quite fond of Bob; he took her so carefully in his great big arms, and spoke to us so cheerily all the time.

Poor darling Patty! so limp and dragged as she looked. All her pretty fal-lals and trimmings dripping wet. Some one had thrown an over-coat over her; and there was her poor lifeless face, with a handkerchief, all spotted and stained with blood, bound round her temples.

Ah, me! if any of you are mothers, think what it would have been to you, and you will know how I felt that day.

It was a weary time till Patty opened her

eyes. What with fright and loss of blood, and the freezing water, it's a marvel to me sometimes, even to this day even, how ever we got the child round at all.

Dr. Smith never once left her side that day. Such trouble as he had to restore circulation, trying first this thing and then that. We were kept continually on the run. I think it a great mercy that there was so much to do, for it kept our thoughts occupied as well as our legs.

We did not hear the rights of the story, of how it all happened, for two or three days after; and I don't understand it quite clearly now.

I believe that Patty was going at a great rate with Mr. Darrel, and some man coming in the opposite direction ran up against them with such force that he fell himself and knocked them down too. Either the man's skate or Mr. Darrel's, they couldn't rightly make out which, struck Patty a heavy blow on the side of the head; and somehow, in trying to save herself, or because she was nearest the edge, or, I should say, because of the slipperiness of the ice, poor Patty got pushed into the hole made for the swans.

Mr. Darrel was very much shaken with his fall; and it was Bob Brown got Patty out and saw to her. That night Patty went off her head and raved, poor dear—it broke my heart to hear her chattering of things maybe she'd never see again in this world.

Dr. Smith had feared concussion of the brain all along, he said, and now it was just touch-and-go whether our darling lived or not. I hardly know how the days passed away after that. I remember the frost was all gone before the doctor said we might hope. When I heard it I just began to sob and cry like a child, and it was all father could do to stop me.

The neighbours were very good sending in to ask after her, especially the Browns; and I must say for Elizabeth she never once reproached me or Patty either, or reminded us that Patty would go spite of her telling her not.

Patty was mending slowly. The doctor said she'd be disfigured for life with that ugly scar on her brow. I didn't mind it much, though, and neither did father. We were too thankful our precious Patty was spared to us to care for anything else.

Bob Brown would often run in and bring some grapes, or some flowers, or what not, to please her; and very kind and thoughtful

I thought it of Bob. Patty seemed to relish the grapes and things more than anything we could give her.



THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

LOOKING INTO IT.

YOUR contributor, who tries very hard to go through life with his eyes wide open, his mental note-book ready, and the pencil of his observation sharpened to a point that is pungent, has of late been much exercised in his mind concerning what it is the fashion to call spiritualism. He one day purchased a weekly periodical devoted to this subject, and in reading it made his hair stand on end, like the very sharp, coarse fur of an animal mentioned by the father of a gentleman who lived some time since in Denmark.

He, moreover, found therein that this spiritualism was here treated in a religious fashion, larded with texts, sauced with hymns, served with prayer, and treated altogether as if it were a new revelation—the great religion that is to eclipse all others, and lead men's minds to that which is right and good.

Your contributor found, moreover, accounts of several séances, during which a medium went into a dark chamber, and played a sort of cerebro-photographico game at developing the glasses of the spectators' and auditors' minds, producing for them a series of pictures most striking and startling in effect. Spirits were raised up, too, from the vasty deep; and, apparently, after death all essences, after leaving this vile body, are resolved either into two great divisions, or into two single beings or doings (more probably the latter, since they are consummate actors), called Katie and Tom King.

Now, all this seemed to your contributor to be passing strange. He was somewhat, to use Captain Cuttle's expression, "taken aback," especially when, upon making inquiry and research, he found that there were scores, hundreds—nay, thousands—of

people ready and willing to believe in all set forth in the spiritualistic periodicals; and that, so far from this being an ephemeral affair, it is one ever on the increase, and taking a great hold upon the minds of men, and a greater hold upon those of women.

It happens that your contributor is a man of a sceptical turn of mind. Of course it is much to be regretted, but he always wants to know *why*, and is not satisfied if he does not find out. He may stand absolutely alone, though he may not think he does, in being ready to obstinately decline to believe in any one nowadays performing what is called a miracle—in fact, he would like to see it done, and examine as to whether the performer of the miracle had any apparatus. Not so very long ago—three or four years, maybe—he did go to see miracles performed, one very hot day, at a hall in Newman-street, where an American doctor was for hours besieged by the halt, the lame, and the blind; the said doctor standing in his shirt-sleeves, with the perspiration pouring down his face, manipulating a most pitiful array of sufferers—paralytics, rheumatics, the dumb, deaf, and blind. He touched them at the rate of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty an hour, and they came up one side of the hall and passed out by the other—cured?

Your Casual Observer never heard that they were; but then he is, as he has confessed, notoriously sceptical about novelties. He is a fair specimen of the burnt child who fears the fire; in fact, your contributor has, to use a homely phrase, "been humbugged," and strongly objects to being humbugged again. But, for all this, he is reasonable, and a progressionist. He strongly believes that there are a great many wonders yet to be discovered by those who will study Nature after the fashion of our great scientific men. He is fully aware of the fact that we are in constant contact with wonders which can well hold their place with the inventions of the storytellers of old. No magician of ancient lore ever did anything more striking than conveying to us, ready for our reading at breakfast, the speeches made in Parliament last night—nay, the news of what took place yesterday in Bengal. The chemist of to-day is a sage who would have given Aladdin's uncle fifty points in a hundred, and beaten him easily; and as to the witches and their magic mirrors, we can give them Pepper any day. Your contri-

butor, then, does not deny the existence of marvels; and what is more, he thoroughly believes in the existence of marvels yet undiscovered. And therefore, after due cogitation, due listening, and due reading, he came to the conclusion that he would much like to see and hear what there was in the spiritualistic movement—whether it was all wheat, whether it was all chaff, or whether it consisted of a few grains of wheat buried in a heap of rough, husky, useless chaff, sold to the public as a genuine nutritious article, and in too many instances taken and devoured blindfold.

The determination come to, your contributor made inquiries, and finding that a séance was to be held under the presidency of a medium of some fame, he set off one evening and walked to the place.

There was a shady sound about the announcement that the charge for admission was half a crown. There was an air about it of "back seats, one shilling; reserved seats, two shillings; chairs, half a crown"—an announcement that the reader may have seen at the bottom of the synopsis of a lecture to be delivered in some country town. Your contributor, however, waived that, telling himself that it was necessary to keep the affair select and free from rough intrusion. He dived into his pocket without a word, drew forth and tendered the coin, and—was refused admittance!

No reason was assigned; only a firm and respectful bearing was assumed, and the doorkeeper seemed to silently declare that he could smell your Observer's scepticism as plainly as if it had been musk.

Your contributor was foiled but not beaten. It was too late to take further steps abroad that night, so he naturally turned his thoughts "tew hum," also his legs; and arriving there, startled the neighbours of his hive by the strangeness of his proceedings.

He says the neighbours—let us say two of the neighbours, for that was the number brought to bear in his experiments. He first called to mind that which he knew concerning the process of dumb incantation, and remembered that spirits have a partiality for that Golgotha or place for a skull called a hat.

A hat was brought, and we will not give the maker's name, lest this should be looked upon as an advertisement. The hat was placed upon a small table, the gas was

not turned down, and your contributor and his two companions arranged their outstretched fingers round the brim of that hat—fingers touching fingers, thumbs touching thumbs—so that a circle was formed round the under part of the brim. Then they waited in silence for a manifestation.

A minute—two minutes—three minutes—four minutes.

The following were the results: a gradually increasing aching pain at the back of the neck, another at the small of the back, and a very strong desire to give the task up and sit down.

At first there was a disposition to laugh at the novelty of our position, quelled, however, by the knowledge that we were calmly trying to investigate a something that was either very singular, or else a complete delusion and trick, fostered by charlatans. Then came a slight touch of that shuddering sensation that affects the back during the recital or reading of a powerfully told ghost story. Your Observer suffered this, as did also the others; and acknowledged it when afterwards comparing notes. Lastly came a feeling of wonder as to whether we were doing right in thus trying to find out something of the unseen, to plunge with prying eyes into the great void beyond ordinary ken—a feeling this, innate and fostered from the days when, as children, we believed in "Old Bogey." Such a feeling, perhaps, as may have been felt by great philosophers when launching their barques to make discoveries. Even Franklin may have flown his silken kite with a slight shiver of dread lest the fire he sought to draw down from heaven might lay him low.

At last, fully five minutes had elapsed, and our intent eyes met—each seeming to ask the question—

"Shall we give it up?"

The same spirit—I speak of ordinary, not extraordinary, spirits here—moved us with the determination to try for a minute longer, and we tried; but before one-half that time had elapsed, it was as if a strong, firm hand had taken the hat by the brim, and, with a steady, slow pressure, screwed it four or five inches round to the right, taking our hands with it; and before we could recover—(nay, suppose your Observer keeps to the first person singular—himself)—before I could recover from my surprise, there was another quiet, steady pressure apparently brought to bear, and the hat moved round a little farther.

"Well," I said, "I vow I did not move it."

"Nor I! Nor I!" said the others.

"It's comical."

"It's very strange."

"I never saw anything like—there, it's off again!"

It *was* off again, and in the most unaccountable manner; for that hat heaved, as it were, beneath our touch, as if filled with some gaseous force which was nearly, but not quite, strong enough to master our pressure. I can compare it to nothing better than the sensation that would be felt if three persons joined hands over a tin can floating in water, pressing it down till its buoyancy acted as a strongly resisting power, and the vessel heaved and tried to escape, first on one side, then upon the other.

"It is very strange," one of us said again.

"Don't speak," said the other, in a tone of voice which showed how much he was impressed; "it might break the spell."

But all the same there seemed no spell to be broken, for the hat turned gently, now more and more, not regularly, but by jerks, till we—keeping our hands in the same relative position—had completed the circuit of the little table, and stood upon somewhere about the spot from which we started.

And now once more the heaving and turning commence, at one moment vigorously, the hat making quite a glide upon the table, the next moment in a hesitating, weak way, but always turning a little more and a little more until it had, as it were, forced us to make a second circuit of the stand, my fingers all the while seeming to be glued to the hat-rim.

Suddenly one of my companions snatched his hands away, took out his handkerchief, and began wiping them hastily.

We then withdrew our own, stood and looked at one another, then stood and looked at the hat.

"Well," I said, "I'll hang this up. I suppose we have done with it for to-night?"

"If you leave it alone," said the owner, "it strikes me that it will go and hang itself up, and choose the peg that's farthest from the draught."

"Not it," I said; "the magic power has gone." And I took up the hat.

"Magic power, indeed!" said its owner.

"I think you had better burn it, for I'll never again trust my head within its rim."

The hat was a very light one, and re-

sounded as I tapped it lightly on the crown; while my other companion looked in it curiously, and examined the lining, as if expecting to find some jugglery or mechanism by which it had been stirred.

There was nothing, however, to be seen; and the puzzlement increased, bringing with it, however, food for thought.

"Why do you keep on wiping your fingers?" I said to my friend.

"Was I wiping them?" he said, hesitatingly. "Oh, it was to get rid of the unpleasant feeling. Don't you notice anything?"

"I must confess that I do," I said—"a peculiar soft, tingling sensation, as if something were running from the tips of my fingers right up my arms."

"That's precisely what we feel," said the others.

And then we all agreed that it was very strange, sitting down to talk the matter over; for we did not feel disposed to try any more experiments with the hat for the present.

We had not learned much; but we had arrived at one fact—and that was, that under certain conditions a hat would move in a very peculiar manner.

But those conditions? Was either of us trying to hoax the others? Had one of the party increased the pressure and applied it in a lateral fashion, so as to produce the turning motion?

I grant the possibility of this, if one of us had been so disposed; but the heaving and swaying motion could not have been achieved. Granting one phenomenon, we saw no reason for doubting the other.

"It is curious," said one of us. "Then are we to set it down as the work of spirits?"

"Well," said the other, "I am ready to acknowledge the existence of spirits; but why, when under certain circumstances an inert body—a hat—is endued with motion, should we attribute that motion to spirit influence? It seems to me that we have for ourselves discovered that the hat will move, and also that it leaves a strange tingling sensation in the nerves after we have removed our fingers from the brim. What we have to do, then, is to find out why these phenomena occur; for it is perfectly childish to set down every fact that is not reducible to the scope of our present knowledge to spiritualism."

"I agree with you," I said, "that there

are still a few things to find out in this little world of ours."

"At a venture, I should say," he continued, "that under certain circumstances a portion of the life force—vitality, moving power, call it what you will—of the human being is conducted by the extremities of certain human beings touching for a time any inert lifeless mass; and so long as the mass is charged with that force, a kind of motion is contained by it, more or less under the control of the beings from whom that force proceeded."

"But," said the other, "how are we to find this out?"

"By patient investigation, possibly—that is, if the theory be right. Let us go on, and try all the various plans that we can learn; and do it in a quiet, scientific spirit. That there is some new force, I am inclined to think; for, as before said, it is too childish to set everything down that we cannot comprehend to the workings of the disembodied."

"Then it is an understood thing," I said, "that we meet here again in a few days, and try what we can find out?"

"Exactly so," was the reply.

And my friends left; the owner of the hat sticking it on manfully, and giving it a decisive and rather jaunty rap to keep it on, as much as to say—

"Who's afraid?"

OUR DAUGHTER PATTY.

CHAPTER IV.

ONE afternoon I bethought me it was a long time since I'd been outside the front door. Patty was in a nice comfortable doze; so I got Elizabeth to sit in her room, told her about the medicine in case I shouldn't be back in time to give it, put on my bonnet and shawl, and went round to have a chat with Mrs. Brown.

I wasn't away above half an hour and ten minutes at the outside. I took off my things, and went into Patty's room. After I'd spoken a few words to Elizabeth, she gathered up her work and went down to the parlour, to be with father. I gave Patty her medicine, and fancied then I noticed her hand was hot and trembled a little, and that her face was flushed. I was putting the room to rights a little, when she called me.

"Yes, dear," said I. "What is it?"

And I came to the bedside.

"Mamma, who sends me those grapes?" said she.

"Bob Brown, my darling," said I; "and very good it is of him. They must be at least four-and-six a pound, this time of year."

"And the flowers?" asked she.

"Yes, love. Bob sends those too, and comes himself every day sure as the clock to ask after you, and see if he can do anything for us. Isn't it kind of him?"

I was glad to praise Bob, for I was really grateful to him.

Patty was silent for a little time, and then she turned her great eyes to me and said—so low I could hardly hear her—

"Does Mr. Darrel never come, mother?"

"He's not here, pet; he's gone back to London. There, don't talk any more, but try to get to sleep a bit," said I, for I began to feel frightened—the child looked so strange.

"Mother, tell me," she said. "I can't sleep till I know for certain. Is it true—is it—what Elizabeth said just now about—about—oh! mother"—and she raised herself and threw her arms round my neck and hid her face on my breast, sobbing—"oh! mother, is he going to be married?"

"Hush, hush, my darling; don't give way so, my precious," I said, kissing her and trying to soothe her. "There, my love, don't; there are as good fish in the sea—Patty, my pet, don't; there's father and your old mother left to love you yet;" for the child was shaking with sobs, and I was beside myself, fearing lest she'd do herself some harm.

It was a good while before I could quiet her, and at night she was back in the fever again, and I had to listen to the sweet innocent babbling, with Mr. Darrel's name for ever on her lips.

Oh! how I blamed myself as I sat there through those weary nights. It was easy to see now what a fool I'd been. If I had but warned Patty! But I, her mother, had let her walk into all this trouble without so much as lifting my little finger to stop it; and, indeed, until that very day I'd known nothing of it all.

Why hadn't I found out all about him before Patty got so fond of him? Of course I didn't know it was more than a flirtation; but then young men that were already engaged to other girls ought not to be let even to flirt with Patty, and he'd led her on to thinking of him, too. Didn't I see him

beg her for the flower out of her hair that night of the Browns' dance?—Bob's flower and all. Well, well, I was the one to have seen to it, and instead I'd been priding myself on the fine lover my poor girl had picked up.

I was a miserable woman in the days that followed, when Patty's life was again despaired of, more down-hearted and wretched than in the days that went before; for I couldn't tell father anything about it. I had to keep it all to myself.

Patty had a wonderful constitution, the doctor said; for even now she did not die. But, oh! it was a sad, strange Patty that came back to us. Her beautiful hair was all gone, and the pretty face—I can't write about it; let us thank Heaven that we have her at all.

It was days before she began to mend, and weeks before she left her bed. Even then such care as we had to take of her. Father carried up his own easy chair, I remember, that first afternoon Dr. Smith said she might sit up a bit; and we propped her up with pillows.

Father hadn't been so like himself not for weeks, and I declare it was quite pitiful to see our Patty trying to smile at his fun, poor child! because she knew it would please him to have his jokes laughed at—so merry as father was, and such wan, tearful smiles as Patty's were! It was heart-breaking, upon my word it was, to look at her now, and think what she was a month or two back.

Patty didn't get strong so quickly as I should have liked, and father and I made up our minds we'd take her away to the seaside a bit, as soon as ever she could bear the moving.

One day, I recollect it well, for it was Anne's day out, and I was near giving her warning well as I liked her, for she actually never came home till a quarter to ten, though she knew well that nine was her hour—and I would have done it, too, for it wasn't the first time Anne had served me like that, only father and I'd arranged that if Patty got on as well as she was doing, we might get away towards the end of the week, so I didn't want an upset in the house just then.

Well, Patty was sat comfortably in father's chair by the fire, with a book on her lap, though she didn't seem to be reading much. Elizabeth was out district visiting—Tuesday was always her day—and father had just

gone for a breath of fresh air, as he said; but I knew quite well that meant a smoke, for father didn't get his pipe regular at all now, on account of Patty not being able to stand the smell of the tobacco.

I began to rack my brain for something to talk to Patty about. I used to tell her all the stories of my young days, and such like I could think of, to liven her up a bit; for she would sit hours if she was let, doing nothing in the world but thinking and thinking—and I felt quite sure it wasn't good for her, poor girl!

I'd just remembered a story mother used to tell me that always made me laugh—about something that happened to her when she was a girl—when there came a knock at the door, and I had to go and open it.

It was Bob Brown come to inquire after Patty, and bring a lovely nosegay and a little basket with some jelly in it, that Jane Brown thought Patty might fancy. Very kind it was of Jane, though I hope she didn't think we couldn't make jellies ourselves. But whether or no, it was good-natured of her; and every one knows that sick folks often relish things more coming in unexpectedly that way than what's made purposely for them.

I was standing talking to Bob, when I heard Patty calling to me—so thin and changed as her voice was. Bob, I could see, quite started when he heard it.

"Wait a minute," said I to him. "I'll bring you back the basket."

I went quickly into the parlour.

"Were you wanting anything, Patty?" I said.

"Is that Bob Brown?" asked she. "I think I should like to see him."

I was quite delighted, for Bob was that cheerful, I knew he'd brighten her up if any one could.

"Would you, dear? That's right. He's brought you these flowers, and his mother has sent some jelly—hum! it's a darker colour than mine, but I dare say it won't eat amiss."

I'd got it out of the basket—a pretty little mould it was, but I never think that dark jelly looks as nice as the pale. Mine was always a lovely light yellow.

I went and told Bob, Patty wished to see him. He looked so pleased.

"You'll find her very much altered; but whatever you do, don't let her see that you think so, if you can help it."

"Trust me, Mrs. Gibson," said he, and walked into the parlour after me, straight up to Patty.

"How d'ye do, Patty? I'm very glad to see you downstairs again," he said, taking her poor thin little fingers in his; and for all he spoke so calm, I saw his lip tremble, and his face flushed nearly as much as Patty's. And well he might be shocked—I don't wonder at it, such a wreck as poor Patty looked then.

"I wanted to see you," said Patty, "to thank you for your kindness. Won't you sit down and talk to me a bit, Bob? I was so afraid we should go away without my seeing you."

"Were you, Patty?" said he, and he took a chair close beside her. "Mother told me you were all going off to the sea. Where are you thinking of going, Mrs. Gibson?"

"Well," said I, "it's not quite settled. Father thought Margate 'ud be a nice lively place; but we must see what Dr. Smith says. Maybe it'll not be mild enough there for Patty this time of year. I thought of Torquay or somewhere about there."

"That's the place," said Bob—"it's always mild down south. You'll soon get up your roses there, Patty."

"I see you won't let me thank you," said Patty, with her little quavering smile. "But there's something I must say. I've had a great deal of time for thought lately, and I want to tell you I'm so sorry I was so rude to you that day—you know—and you've been so kind to us, Bob. I couldn't go away without telling you this."

"Nonsense, Patty—kind to myself, you mean. I couldn't do less than come and inquire after you, when it was our Emmy got you to go on the ice at all. Could I, Mrs. Gibson?"

"Come and inquire? Well, no," said I; "but then you and the rest of your family have been kind to us in other ways besides. I know I feel grateful to you all, and I'm sure Patty does too."

"There, there, Mrs. Gibson, say no more about it. You make me feel how little one can do for—for"—and then he turned it off. "By the way, Patty, how did you like that last book I sent you?"

"Very much. But there's one other thing I want to say to you—at least, I mean that I want you to do for me" (and I couldn't think whatever the child was about—she seemed so nervous, and her face flushed so

while she fumbled about in her pocket, and I saw her take out her purse). "Will you, Bob, will you be so good as to send this back to your friend, Mr. Darrel?"

Her lips were trembling so, she could hardly speak; and then I saw it was the little hoop of pearls she'd had sent to her on Christmas Day she was holding out to him.

"I don't know the address. Will you send it, Bob?"

"Why, Patty," cried Bob, "I sent you that myself, for a Christmas present. I thought——"

"You! you! Oh, Bob! what a weak, foolish girl I have been!" and Patty threw up her hands to her face and fell sobbing. "Oh! Bob, what must you think of me?"

I got up to run to her, but before I could move there was Bob on his knees by her side, and her head on his shoulder.

"Think, my poor darling?" said he, stroking her hair; and his voice shook so I could scarce hear it. "I think this is your place, love, and I think——"

But Patty wouldn't listen to him; she raised herself out of his arms.

"No, no, Bob, I didn't mean that; but I am so weak, and I thought I could be so strong," she sobbed.

I was that dazed I stood stock still staring at them.

"Hush, love. For God's sake, don't send me away again," said Bob.

"You don't know, Bob. I'm not worth your love now. I've been so wicked and foolish," sobbed Patty. "Look at me, what a wreck I am! See! You can't love me—oh, you can't! And when you come to know— It's impossible. You can't—you can't! I hate myself. How can you——"

"Stop, Patty. Hush, love; you'll break my heart. I know, darling, what you want to tell me."

And there was Patty in Bob's arms again.

I stole away out of the room, and went straight upstairs, and began crying like a baby.

When I came down to see about tea, Bob was still there, and he stayed all the evening.

"Couldn't leave Patty," he said; and Patty, though she was so quiet, I could see liked him to stay.

Father was that pleased, I never saw him go on so. Said he knew all along how it would be, though how he could say so passes me altogether. Even Elizabeth didn't seem

so surprised as I should have expected. Anne, when she heard it, was quite beside herself with the thoughts of a wedding in the house, though I told the silly girl it couldn't possibly be for months.

I had a long talk with Patty that night, and she told me that Bob had asked her long ago—on the night of the party—but she wouldn't have anything to say to him then one way or the other. He'd never given up hoping, but had meant to wait till we came back from the sea before asking again, only he told Patty he couldn't help himself.

Patty said he told her he'd guessed, from putting this and that together, how it had been about Mr. Darrel, but not until it was too late.

She said he was so good and kind, and blamed himself for not making sure she knew of Mr. Darrel's engagement, and those that led her on to think what she did; but said never one word of blame to her.

And then Patty went to the glass and looked at herself, and cried, and said she'd so little to give him in return for all he was giving her.

She told me how she had meant to live out her life unmarried, and try to do good among the poor; although she'd come to know of late that Bob was dearer to her than all else in the world besides.

She put the little ring on her finger; and I saw her, when I'd said good night and was going to turn down the light, put it to her lips and kiss it.

Late that autumn, Bob and Patty were married; and though Patty was quieter than she used to be, I will say this for her, that she didn't look amiss as a bride. With her hair brought well down on her brow, one could scarce see the scar; and each year one'll notice it less, I suppose. At all events, Bob doesn't seem to care much about it.

I let Anne go to them, for she'd got that fond of Patty; besides, I know what strange servants are with young housekeepers, taking such liberties, the idle jades. I've changed twice since then, and the one I've got now is under notice to quit. I'm not one to stand their vagaries, and that I'll show them.

I was at Patty's house the other day, and a nicer little house and a happier couple you wouldn't meet in a day's march.

Father says he "can see as far through a stone wall as most people," and that it won't

be long before there's another wedding in the family. I don't know how that may be; certainly, Mr. Canter comes dropping in very often of an evening, and Elizabeth seems to like it too.

Patty has made us all promise to spend next Christmas Day at her house; but however many Christmases I spend, I'll never, no, never forget the fright I got on that Christmas Day when I thought we'd lost our daughter Patty.

THE END.

ME AND MY DOGS.

JORUM.

THERE is something very free and jovial in the life of such a dog as Jorum, who came to and went from the village just as he pleased. I feel sure that he must have looked down with a lofty contempt upon all pet dogs with fancy collars—all daintily washed, cleanly creatures, led about by chain or string, and upon the inhabitants of those high-peaked, gable-ended, green kennels in the various yards he passed. He was nobody's dog, was Jorum; and when the new dog tax came in force, but for my well-known dislike to the whole dog tribe, I might have been tempted to pay the required five shillings for making him free. I knew Jorum well, and entertained a certain respect for him; for he was an honest, upright dog, with one exception—he would poach. It seemed strange that he should have led such a vagabond life, for there was good blood in Jorum's veins, though no doubt his ancestors must have married and intermarried with many families; there was many a point, though, in which could be traced his descent, though so dissolving, as it were, into other points, that it required study to thoroughly know Jorum's points, let alone his characteristics. There was a trifle of the length of leg and muscular development of the greyhound, the heavy lips of the mastiff, the heavy front of the bull and its broad chest; while his grey, rugged coat spoke of descent from the Scottish colley. No one could ever have committed himself so far as to say that Jorum was a handsome dog—he was anything but that. But he was a dog of mind and purpose, a dog that the bitterness of life never troubled, and who took things as they came—basked in the sunshine and en-

joyed it, shook off the raindrops of the wet days, and disdained to shiver.

He was nobody's dog; but in turn Jorum had many masters, and would do an odd job for anybody. He would help a drover with his sheep for miles along the road, and then sit in front of him at a roadside public-house, and catch most cleverly the morsels of bread and scraps of cheese rind pitched to him by way of payment; while a small puddle of beer poured for him in a corner would be lapped up with gusto. But the meal ended, and the flock of sheep beyond a certain limit, Jorum turned back, while no amount of coaxing would get him on another step. With drovers, a certain number of miles on each side of the village formed his beat; and the extremity reached, Jorum trotted back. Flaire, the butcher, never thought of going to market without Jorum, who was always to be found waiting outside the shop ready for the butcher on those particular days, ready to fetch home a bullock, whose paunch Jorum knew would be his reward; and Flaire was always most scrupulous in his payments.

"I'd keep him altogether, sir," said Flaire, "for a more excellent dog never lived; but he won't stop."

Not he. Jorum loved change. Not that he was idle; but his soul revolted at the thoughts of chains, kennels, and slavery.

Another job of Jorum's was to fetch Mrs. Temse's cows up at milking-time from off the common, and this task he would execute night and morning with the greatest of regularity, gratefully lapping up the bowl of buttermilk which he had for recompense. There was no driving there, either going or coming back, for a regular understanding seemed to exist between Jorum and the great teeming-uddered cows. Morning and evening, wet or dry, there would be Jorum outside Mrs. Temse's door. "Now, Jorum," she would cry; and up would jump the dog, and trot slowly off down the lane towards the common, where he would be stopped by the gate; but here he would turn off and run up to a cottage door, wag his tail, and look up at the face of any one he encountered; when, his wants being known, generally speaking, a child would run down and open the gate, stopping and swinging till Jorum returned with the cows. The dog could easily enough have got through, but the object was to get some one at the gate to open it when he came back with his

charge. And there was no driving here. Jorum would get the cows together, and then slowly march back, the quiet old animals following him, lowing gently, through the gate, along the lane, and up to Mrs. Temse's, where they were relieved of their burden, Jorum the while looking on with critical eye, as if measuring the quantity each cow gave. Then, the order being given and the yard gate opened, Jorum would trot away slowly, looking back from time to time to see that his charges followed, and stirring up a loiterer now and then if she stopped to take a nibble at the green herbage by the lane side. But there was no bullying, barking, and heel-gnawing, for a quiet understanding seemed to exist—the cows knew Jorum, and Jorum knew the cows, often leaping up to rub his old piebald face against their great damp noses, while the grey, soft-eyed old creatures would exhale their odorous breaths with a whiff, and seem to enjoy the attentions. Only let a strange dog interfere, it were well for that dog had he never been pupped, for Jorum would set up the grey hair round his powerful neck, and shake the intruder without mercy. It was Jorum who gave little Pepper so salutary a lesson when he rushed through the flock of sheep.

We had met frequently—Jorum and I—before I could boast of the honour of his acquaintance; when one day he introduced himself to me, and I had a sample of the traits I have endeavoured to describe above. I was walking slowly homewards after a constitutional, when I was somewhat surprised to see the great rough fellow come trotting up to me, bowing and smiling, and capering about me in the most peculiar manner. As a matter of course I was somewhat taken by surprise, for the animal's instinct must have taught him how unpromising a subject I was where dogs were concerned. However, there was such a display of good fellowship in Jorum—of whom I had heard a good report—that I certainly did condescend to say—

"Poor fellow, then!"

I'm sure I don't know why, except that I believed it to be the correct thing, and what I ought to do. At all events, it answered its purpose, for the dog seemed well satisfied, dashing off a short distance, and then charging down to within a few yards, to crouch till I nearly reached him, when he would dash off again, making huge bounds after the fashion of his greyhound

ancestors; and I could not help recalling rumours I had heard respecting Jorum doing a bit of coursing occasionally for his own especial sport and pleasure. For my part, I still went on at my customary pace, at a loss to comprehend why the dog had come to meet me, and was performing all these antics during my progress. The secret, though, was soon made plain; for having bounded up to me again and again, gazing up in my face with his earnest, intelligent eyes, he suddenly stopped short by Butcher Flaire's gate, looking hard at the thumb-latch and then at me; while when I turned out of the path, smiling at the dog's sense, his tail wagged furiously and he burst out into a long bark of thanks, which only ended when I opened the back gate, and let him bound through.

I had often read of similar displays of instinct upon the part of dogs, but this was the first I had seen; and I soon found that it was common for Jorum to get gates opened in that way.

As to his name, it must not be supposed that it was in any way connected with that of a biblical king. Jorum's name was, I believe, on account of his appetite. Whole Jorum was the correct term; but this was soon shortened into Jorum, by which appellation he was known to every man, woman, or child in Bubbley Parva.

He would do a good turn for anybody, would Jorum, so long as it was within bounds; the only exception he made being in favour of the butcher and the visits to market. But he kept steadily to this task, in spite of adverse circumstances. In fact, Jorum did not get on very well at the market town, where Mr. Flaire was in the habit of visiting a certain inn, kept by a particularly particular widow—a decidedly uncomfortable woman, whose idea of the perfection of human bliss lay in a clean floor and a brightly black-leaded grate. Now, considering that the butcher was his master for the time being, it was only reasonable that Jorum should follow him into the inn parlour, and stretch himself out to dry in front of the fire if he happened to be wet—which was often the case—while more often than not his feet were dirty; and, in spite of his instinct, Jorum had no idea of giving his paws a rub on the mat. The consequence was that the landlady vowed vengeance against the dog, and more than once tried to shut him out. But Jorum

generally contrived to elude her vigilant eye; and now he would slip in behind the butcher, now before him; and finding that he was not allowed to make the bright fender rusty, nor to make wet impressions of his body upon the white stones, he would make the best of things, and creep under the butcher's chair, where he was at all events safe from molestation. There he would sit and watch the landlady, setting at defiance her endeavours to dislodge him. In fact, he did not mean to be dislodged. He could not help being dirty. Who could that had been tramping through the mire and rain, while the butcher drove, and did not so much as soil his top boots? He was a vagabond certainly, and from choice too, for he could have had more than one comfortable home; but none the less he could appreciate a warm fireside.

"He shan't muck and mess my place no more," the landlady said at last; and, laying her plans, she trapped Jorum into a back room by treacherously offering him a beef bone. He might have known better—he might have felt sure that it was only a trick; but he had a soul above petty suspicion; and, in the frankness of his heart, he followed the base woman into the back room, where he was attacked by the potboy and a base lad with broomsticks, and compelled to make a sharp fight to get off. But, poor fellow, he was severely drubbed, though not without showing fight most valiantly, and leaving his marks upon his cowardly assailants. It would have gone hard with him, no doubt, if he had not watched his opportunity, and, leaping upon a table, shot right through the window—shivering the pane of glass, of course, to atoms.

"He won't come here no more, though," said the landlady.

And of course he did not enter that inhospitable porch again, but used to take his place opposite the inn, and sit and watch from a stone in a corner until his master once more came out. Hour after hour he would sit there waiting, with the greatest of patience; holding the while, no doubt, a lofty contempt for the treacherous woman who had driven him from her door. One thing, however, was very certain, Jorum bore no malice, but bore the ills of life with the greatest of equanimity.

One way and another, Jorum picked up a very good living, what with milk from Mrs. Temse and the odds and ends from Flaire's.

Children, too, would often give him scraps of bread and butter or treacle, for the sake of seeing him snap them so readily, catching them in those spring-trap jaws of his with the greatest ease. But there was undoubtedly another source from which Jorum drew supplies for his commissariat department—namely, the woods and fields; for there was no mistake about it, Jorum was a most notorious poacher, and, knowing his sins, he would never by any chance face a keeper with a gun. Sir Hector Hook's man had more than once vowed vengeance against him on account of the rabbits in Bosky Wood, while Lord Quarandjelle's men had a shrewd suspicion that Jorum was to blame for the scarcity of hares on coursing days.

They were right enough, for it fell to my lot to catch him in the fact, both with regard to hares and also rabbits. I found him coolly devouring a rabbit one day while fungus-hunting in the wood, my attention being attracted by the sharp, cracking sound of breaking bones; and there he was, upon a mossy couch, making a delicate meal off a young rabbit.

I very naturally exclaimed, "Hallo! you sir;" but he only gave me a look, as much as to say, "It's all right—I saw you coming. We're friends, and I don't mind you." There he lay, crunching away, and apparently thoroughly enjoying the marrowy bones he was picking. First he looked at me with one eye, then with the other, as the necessities of the case demanded; but as to appearing ashamed or attempting to fly, that was quite out of the question. However, I was not Sir Hector Hook's keeper, and it was no concern of mine if friend Jorum liked to run the risk of having his skin peppered with shot for the sake of a bit of sport on his own account and a dainty meal. So I went on with my fungus-hunting, collecting agaric and boletus, and forgetting my adventure in another five minutes.

The second time I ran against Jorum when poaching happened as I was botanizing, in a pleasant lane, in autumn. The trees were gleaming with the richest hues, while from overhead was showered down a rain of golden leaves; in the banks peeped here and there the blue petals of the dog-violet, and the pale, star-like primrose, unseasonable blossoms tempted into bloom by the mildness of the season. Now picking a leaf here and a strand there, I was jogging pleasantly along, mentally com-

paring brick-and-mortar London with the joyous, exhilarating air of the country, when there came a rush, and a hare darted through the hedge, leaped the opposite bank, and, plunging through the damp herbage of the second hedge, disappeared. I had but a flying glance of the soft brown fur, great eyes, and black-tipped ears, laid flat upon pussy's neck, and was stooping once more to cull some floral treasure, when the heavy beat of some animal fell upon my ear; and, directly after, there was a loud rustle, and, with nose down close to the earth, friend Jorum came hurrying through the hedge, just in the same track as had been taken by the hare. He glanced at me as he passed, and seemed to give me a friendly nod; and then, snuffing the track, nose down close to the earth, he followed the trail up the opposite hedge, dashed through the herbage, and he was gone.

"You'll get into difficulties some day, my friend," I thought; and then began to moralize upon the fate of the hare, which must certainly be to be devoured by the dog, who possessed the hound's scent, with the sharp sight and something of the speed of his long-legged ancestors.

No licence, no permit, it seemed ticklish work; and I felt somewhat grieved to see that Jorum had fallen into such vicious habits. Here was the explanation of his love of a vagabond life and dislike to kennel and chain. It was undoubtedly the true love of nature and sport, combined with a fine appetite, which made Jorum hunt; but for all that I could not help predestinating an untimely end for the intruder upon preserved lands. I knew that it must come to a sharp report following a quick aim, and mentally I saw poor Jorum rolled over and gasping upon the green turf he loved to roam across. What would Mrs. Temse do? Who would help Flaire to fetch his once a week fattened ox? Who then would become the children's playmate, and catch scraps of bread in their flight through the air, or suffer them balanced upon his nose till the donor said "snap," when they were thrown up and caught? The drovers would look for him in vain; other dogs would come begging round Flaire's door; and some dirty scrub of a boy would drive instead of leading the cows to and from the cow-house. Why, no one could get pigs over the ground like Jorum. You never saw the awkward, obstinate, pig-headed brutes running in all

sorts of contrary directions when he had the management; for he somehow contrived to shoulder them along, always getting a leading pig in front, with whom he seemed to have a private understanding.

But my thoughts were premature: keepers still have their suspicions, and Jorum has his occasional hare or rabbit, does his work, and vagabondizes more than ever, while I feel certain that a sleep in which I lately saw him stretched was not natural, but in a great measure due to the puddle of ale he had lapped up after having helped with a drove of sheep. It is a pity that a dog of such excellent understanding should be guilty of wrongdoing; but, after all, one could never help having a certain amount of respect for the wandering dog, due, no doubt, to the openness and gentleness of his character.

By the way, I had composed an epitaph, somewhat prematurely, of course, to be placed over the grave of Jorum. It was a capital affair, and read with amazing fluency; in fact, I was rather surprised myself to find how easy the lines came. It seemed to me that I had heard them before; but I read them over to a lady friend, who immediately exclaimed—

"Exceedingly nice. I always did admire those lines of Byron's!"

Of course, after that I compared them with the epitaph on the celebrated Boat-swain, and then burnt the epitaph on Jorum. Long may he live without requiring such a post-mortem honour!

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

WITH THE POLICE.

"ARST him for my fare, sir, an' he 'it me slap in the mouth. There's my ticket, sir, and all I wants is my fare."

The speaker is a cabby, and the pugnacious "him" alluded to is a shabby-looking little man rolling about in the iron cage called a dock, like a ship at anchor in a swell. The gentleman is a barber, and has been enjoying himself; but, evidently considering cabby to be a liar upon the subject of fares, he smote him on the mouth. Cabby talks excitedly, the barber thickly, the sum total of his speech being a contemptuous declaration that he "can pay *him*"—a declaration he corroborates by jingling a few shillings in his hand. Cabby calls the policeman "Sir," and evidently does not mind the assault so long as he gets his fare.

The inspector on duty patiently hears both sides, cabby gets his money, and barber rolls away, narrowly escaping a night's lodging in one of the cells. Then, once again, silence falls upon the orderly, white-washed walls of Bow-street, save that a clock ticks hard by where a few pairs of handcuffs hang upon a wall; the inspector's pen scratches busily as he makes formal entries in a big ledger—a sort of earthly recording-angel work—a debtor and creditor account

of the sins of that part of London; and a telegraphic machine, whose wires run to Great Scotland-yard, gives forth its watch-like message.

The clock declares midnight to be near, and the rumble of carriages has increased, for the theatres are being emptied; and, after a pause, a well-dressed female glides in, the night inspector takes his place, and his closely veiled visitor volubly states her grievance in broken English.

"I vas zere, and I say, 'No, no, you shall not;' and zen she strike me again and again, and strike me down, and I call 'Poliz, poliz!' but ze poliz are not dere; and see my clothes, they are mud. And zen he say—"

"Ah, there was a man in the case?" says the inspector.

"Oh, yees, there was a man; and zen ze cabman—"

And so on; the inspector fighting his way through a very gooseberry bush of English-Italian elocution, the fruit of which is, that two harpies have been fighting for their prey; and one, the complainant, exhibits, on raising her thick veil, a face painted by her rival with bruises, and also by herself with toilet accessories to conceal the defects—the result being ghastly in the extreme.

Calm and unimpassioned, the inspector hears all, twists his pen over the charge sheet, and then gives his advice concerning summons, &c. "The Casino, identification, sergeant of police," and "that woman" are referred to; and the lady, voluble of thanks, hurries away to dress and visit the Casino, for the purpose of pointing out her assailant.

Silence again.

We are very methodical here. There was a good deal of tramping, marching, and countermarching when the men went out for night duty, and more when the relieved ones came in.

But now we have another case, and a little excitement. A couple of policemen bring in a smart-looking young fellow, very drunk, but perfectly sober according to himself; there are two lady and three gentlemen witnesses, and once more the inspector turns himself into a moral sieve to separate the grains of evidence from the superabundant chaff.

Defendant has been running a civilized muck "In the Strand — in the Strand."

According to the evidence of different witnesses, our friend, clinging to the dock rails, and evidently animated by that spirit which made Mr. Pickwick dash his hat and spectacles insantly upon the kitchen floor, struck a respectable-looking female on the forehead, tore off the bonnet of another—said black crape wisp being held up for our edification—knocked down two little boys, and threw a book he carried upon the pavement—said book bearing Mr. Mudie's well-known label.

In short, the man has acted as the human machine will act with the governing power washed out. He has nothing to say by way of explanation, save that he "wouldn't be guilty of such an act, and that he didn't know anything about it."

Whereupon the charge sheet is read over to him, witnesses sign and undertake to press the charge, and our friend is removed to the cells, in the pleasant solitude of one of which he trolls forth a jovial song; but on following a bull's-eye-armed inspector a quarter of an hour after, in a tour of the cells, we find the "run a muck" wrapped in slumber and undisturbed by rattling key and bolt, or the flash of light.

In another cell are two women who arrived early in the day. One, an Irish lady, rattles out in objurgatory strain upon the shame that she should be kept there. Her words roll out in a perfect stream, tripping one another up so fast that it is absolutely impossible to understand one-eighth of that which she says.

Her companion, on the contrary, is quiet and subdued. She is in widow's weeds *now*, and merely petitions to be placed in a cell to herself, as her companion "does go on so."

Her petition being granted, we see that she is respectably dressed, and evidently in the depressing stage that follows a debauch.

As to the reason for her being there, it is that a maternal law takes care of those who cannot take care of themselves. She was found in the street, apparently oppressed by the heat, having adopted the costume of our first mother, before the epoch of fig-leaves and skins of beasts.

Back in the office another charge is ready for us.

A wild young Irishwoman is in the dock; her face red, furious, and her eyes flashing fiery adjuncts to her verbal arrows.

Her hair hangs about her shoulders, save when she jigs it up into a chignon; neck and shoulders are partly bare, and, like a flag of defiance, she flaunts and waves a ragged old shawl.

She is from the Seven Dials, and has been playfully disposed, fighting, kicking, and scratching; breaking the peace and people's heads, ending by kicking the policeman who took her into custody. Apparently, she is a follower of Darwin, for as she jerks herself about, showering words on every side in a way that displays her excitement, she advances and retires, and waves her flag, and calls the inspector and his assistant "monkeys," her arrows all glancing off the calm official armour. It was not her at all, at all. It was her husband bate her, and some one knocked her down, and she was ill-used, and what did they bring her there for?—*ad infinitum*, till she is removed, defiant to the last, to the cells, leaving exhalations of Kingsley's "Yeast," in the form of "Vitriol Madness," in the dock.

They seem never to have any drunken men here: the dock revolves, the floor heaves and falls, and the singing gas-jets dance like the other objects in the room; but, to a man, the prisoners brought in are "shober as you are shelf, sir?"

So a gentleman declares who has apparently just walked out of *Punch*. What handkerchief he has is fastened under one ear; his hat has been put on for him—far back; he seems ready to slip out of everything, clothes included, into that mental obscurity whither his mind has gone long before; but he still babbles on like a water—no, no! a beer—brook of the foulest and most muddy nature.

The police, searching him as he clings almost frantically to the iron rails, like a passenger to the bulwarks of a Boulogne boat, are "all wrong—quite wrong."

"Whatsh yer bring me here for? I'm aw right, and you may shersh me till you're tired."

"Drunk and incapable" goes down on the inspector's ruled form—the charge sheet of the night, and the five shillings fine to be paid in the morning cannot be hard for a night's lodging and abundant care.

A man in uniform yawned just now, and we catch the complaint. No wonder, for the hours are small, but Bow-street never closes its eyes.

THE MAGIC MIRROR.

A FAIRY TALE FOR THE YOUNG.

SOME people say that nowadays there are no such things as fairies—that their day has long gone by. And some even dare to hold and express the opinion that they never existed. All I can say is, that these people are entirely wrong. For have we not heard of fairies ever since we can remember? Have we not read of them and their wonderful doings, both good and evil, in lots and lots of books? And we know that whatever we read in print *must* be true! Do we not all know and believe that Santa Claus on Christmas Eve comes down the chimney on a broomstick, and fills all empty hanging stockings with all sorts of presents for the little ones, putting in each little stocking what each little owner thereof most desires; and who but a fairy could do that?

Do we not hear of mysterious breakages that nobody has committed; while Mary, the housemaid, most solemnly avers "that it was the cat as did it"? We all know that *our* cat was shut up in the cellar teaching her little kittens to catch mice, far too busily employed to think of being up to mischief; and as no mortal cat could have made its way through fast-shut doors and windows, of course it was a revengeful fairy who had taken the form of one of the feline race, and broken our crockery. Now, as I have most clearly proved to you that fairies still hold their sway over this world, if you do not believe in the story I am about to relate to you, beware of the fairies' wrath, and especially beware of that destructive cat!

About eleven o'clock on a cold Christmas Eve two young girls were sitting over the fire in a pretty chintz bed-room, the sanctum sanctorum of Zoe Leslie, that dark, handsome girl who is lazily unpinning her glossy hair, and letting it fall around her face in great thick waves. That pretty little, fair-haired creature busily engaged disentangling her curly wig is her bosom friend and cousin, Grace Leslie, who has come to spend her Christmas at Fair Holm, as Zoe's home is called.

"What a thing it is to be rich," suddenly exclaimed Zoe, who for some time past had been looking dreamily into the fire, unnoticed by her little companion, who was very

busy waging war against her obstinate locks, and bent upon bringing them into subjection in the form of a steady, sober plait. "I wish I were like you, with 'only my face my fortune,' as the old song says. The idea of my godfather leaving me all his money! He little thought what misery and perplexity it would bring me, instead of happiness and comfort, as he fondly imagined. The dear old man! Filthy lucre! how I abominate you! It is truly said, 'Money is the root of all evil.'"

"Oh, Zoe," broke in her cousin, "do not say that. See how you have it in your power to render others happy."

"Oh, yes—it is all very well for charity, I know," impatiently interrupted Zoe. "I am thinking of my own troubles. Here I am, a rich heiress, and therefore a prize for all adventurers. Why, I have had about twenty offers since I have come into my money—all sorts and sizes, from a lord to a lawyer. It was only last night, at Lady Brown's party, that that little whipper-snapper, Lord Tomkins, had the audacity to propose to me, and actually looked quite offended and astonished when I told him that, like the others, he should have his answer at my cotillion party on Boxing Night. I believe he thought I should have been only too delighted to have the honour of bearing his name, and would jump at his proposal at once!"

"And do you really intend," asked Grace, "to give the poor anxious lovers their answer then?"

"Yes, certainly," answered her cousin, laughing. "As I have obtained my guardian's consent to managing my love affairs as I please, I arranged this party on purpose to avoid the painful duty of having to say a decided 'no' to twenty different suitors, for I know that is how it will end. They only want me for my money, and not for myself. I think it is a capital idea. They will know their fate in the figure of the looking-glass; for as their faces, looking over my shoulder, are reflected in the mirror that I hold in my hand, they will have their answer; for the sign is, if I refuse them I efface their image from the glass, and if I accept them I dance with them."

"But is there not one out of all the twenty," said Grace, "that you like just a little bit?"

"No," said Zoe—"strange to say, not one; and, what is still more strange, the only young man that I *do* like, Harry Lonsdale,

the vicar's son, cannot bear me! He always shuns my society; and when we do happen to come into contact with each other, he is quite brusque, and almost wanting in the common courtesies of polite society."

"Perhaps that is his natural manner," argued Grace. "Some people are by nature rather abrupt."

"No, that is the mystery," despondently answered her cousin. "To others he is the essence of politeness, but to me he always maintains the same cold and extraordinary behaviour."

"Oh, dear! I wish we lived in the time of fairies, and they would perhaps let us have a peep at people's hearts, and then we should know their real worth."

"Happy thought! this is Christmas Eve, when I have heard it said Santa Claus gives us what we most desire. I shall try the old fellow. Let me see—what shall I wish for? Oh, I know, a magic mirror; which, reflecting a person's face, shall disclose to me his true character. That would do splendidly for my cotillion."

A few moments after this conversation, the two cousins, with busy thoughts of the coming eventful night, fell fast asleep.

Christmas Day arrived, commencing with a bright, frosty, sunny morning. The early bells pealing forth merrily, and the sun streaming into the room, combined to disturb the peaceful slumbers of Grace. She started up, but finding Zoe still fast asleep, she debated in her mind whether she would have one, only just one little, delicious snooze, or get up. She very soon decided upon the former course, as being the more agreeable, and was on the point of putting it into execution, when suddenly her eye was caught by something glittering on her cousin's pillow.

"What can it be?"

She ran to see, and found it to be a quaint, plainly-set looking-glass. She began to examine it, and wonder how it could have got there, when she discovered that, held in a certain light, it revealed an inscription which ran as follows:—

"I, the truth and love
Of mortals test and prove."

"See, see, Zoe," cried she, "here is your fairy mirror!"

Zoe started up in alarm at hearing the excited voice of her cousin, but her alarm was soon lost in wondering delight at the possession of the precious fairy gift.

Its mysterious arrival, wonderful inscription, and magic powers formed the topic of the two girls' conversation during their toilet; but they both agreed to keep it a secret till the arrival of Boxing Night.

Christmas Day passed very slowly with them. They thought it would never end, for they were all impatient for the advent of the morrow.

At last, like all other days, it came to a close, and the long-looked-for and all-important day arrived.

All day long the two cousins were busy making pretty little bows of various-coloured ribbons, fairy-like bouquets, wonderful dice of a size fit for a giant to throw, and all sorts of other pretty things, the utility of which all those initiated in the mysteries of the dance of the cotillon would understand.

The pretty and tasteful arrangements did credit to the girls' deft fingers, and they had only just completed them when it was high time to dress for the evening.

About nine o'clock the expected guests began to arrive, pouring in one after another; and for some time there was nothing but a succession of rat-tat-tats at the door, clattering of feet, and rustling of dresses.

The evening commenced with the usual round of quadrilles, vales, &c., of which the young people showed their thorough enjoyment in their bright, happy faces and merry laughter.

Towards the middle of the evening the whisper went round that the cotillon was about to take place, and the dancers soon arranged themselves for this eventful dance.

It was a scene worthy the pencil of an artist. The young beaux, on bended knee, presenting bouquets to the fair ones whom they had chosen for a round in the dance; and each young maiden blushing and with trembling fingers pinning a gay bow on the young man's coat whom she, in her turn, had selected as partner. All the pretty and different devices for the dance were brought into requisition and exhausted, with the exception of the looking glass.

How Zoe's heart beat high now that the important and long-looked-for moment had arrived. She began to quake at the ordeal she had to go through; but the thought of the magic talisman she had in her possession gave her fresh strength and courage.

Many fair damsels preceded her to the conspicuous seat; and merry was the laughter

when the fair occupants, difficult to please, sent partners away with rueful looks!

At last it was Zoe's turn to take her place in the chair, which she did, feeling that it was a question for a partner for life, and not merely for a dance.

The young men who aspired to her hand felt their hearts fluttering, and misgivings beginning to arise; and each hung back, not to be the first to venture.

At last little Lord Tomkins stepped forward with a self-satisfied air, and peeped over Zoe's shoulder in the mirror. He saw his face reflected; but, oh, horror! on his forehead were written in flaming letters, the words—

"Ruin! Debt!"

He stood aghast, transfixed; for it was only too true. Zoe's money was the last straw the drowning man could catch at.

Zoe saw the warning words, and smiled contemptuously as she passed her handkerchief over the mirror.

By degrees all the suitors went to read their fate, and the condemnatory inscription which they bore met their horrified gaze. For all had sought the rich and beautiful girl's hand for the sake of her wealth. The poor wretches were frantic at the thought that their mean motives, in this mysterious and terrible manner, should be exposed to the whole world; till stolen glances in the mirror over the mantelpiece reassured them—the fearful inscription having vanished; and they comforted themselves with the idea that it was only a wild fancy of their own brain.

The game still went on; and, to Zoe's astonishment, she presently saw Harry Lonsdale's face reflected in her mirror, with his bright, honest gaze, and the words "I love you," standing out in bold truth upon his noble brow. He started to see the secret which he had so long kept close and sacred make itself known in spite of him, and in so wonderful and unaccountable a manner; but Zoe, with a little cry of delight, jumped up, forgetful of her fairy gift, which fell to the ground and shivered into a thousand pieces. With a glance of deep regret at the utter destruction of her magic mirror, but with a look of trusting love at Harry, she took his arm for the dance, and, in so doing, proclaimed to all that he was the chosen one.

And so, dear friends, you see Santa Claus, my pet fairy, saved Zoe Leslie from a mer-

cenary and heartless husband, and revealed to her a true and loving heart by means of his fairy gift of the magic mirror.



AUSTIN CHASUBLE'S LOVE CHANCE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—I.

"ONE should try to be contented, Mrs. Bosely. We are all given what is needful for us, you know."

"So we be, sir, so we be; but the draught do come in at that 'ere door dreadful, it do. I feels it across my lines like the stroke of a stick, no less."

"Well, you must speak to your landlord; and if he won't do anything, be patient. Patience is—" &c., &c.

Thus I, curate of St. Stephen's-in-the-West, to Mrs. Bosely, ex-laundress and present out-door pauper, in No. 3, Jinks'-alley, sitting on one of Mrs. Bosely's bottomless cane chairs, and uttering weak platitudes by way of soothing Mrs. Bosely's complaints. Do not sneer, my reader. Is it not the special province of a curate to utter the said mildly moral sentences, and sit on bottomless chairs, for a given period out of every twenty-four hours? "Silence the complaint by relieving the want"! My friend, every old woman in the parish has a draughty door with which she would not part for the diamond mines of Golconda. Were I to give Mrs. Bosely a shilling, and bid her have her door mended, she would spend it in snuff, and go on com-

plaining. Were I to send a man to do it—I don't know, but I think she would resist actively, and, if overcome, would possibly take cold and die.

And, meanwhile, Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Black, have each their draughty door.

For all these reasons I quietly balanced myself on my purgatorial chair, and said that which was expected from me. Mrs. Bosely's room was about six feet square, and smelt strongly of herring and cabbage—result, probably, of Mrs. Bosely's dinner. The window—two panes of sooty glass—was shut and wedged, my hostess objecting on principle to fresh air. I had had no dinner, no lunch even, having been "visiting" since breakfast. My feet were in a pool of water, which had oozed in from under Mrs. Bosely's door. Something nearly allied—unless my shrinking senses deceived me—to the Norfolk Howard family was leisurely patrolling the back of my neck. The preserved perfumes of dinner and Jinks'-alley made me feel sickish; but it was Mrs. Bosely's day for ten minutes' clerical comfort, and ten minutes she must accordingly have.

"And my rheumatics, sir," pursued the dame, plaintively, "they be that dreadful I can't abide 'em. They crockles one all up like, they does."

"Your share of this world's afflictions, Mrs. Bosely," said I, settling my Roman collar—for the ten minutes were nearly up. "Rheumatism is a very painful thing, but one ought to count it a privilege to bear the crosses which—"

I had got thus far when I was interrupted by a sharp knock at the door.

"There's the taxes, drat 'em!" cried Mrs. Bosely, forgetting her pastor's presence in natural irritability. "Come in, do."

And accordingly there came in—not the taxes, but a beautiful girl, about nineteen; a girl with big, blue, lambent eyes; with a sweet, flushed face, oval shaped, and dimpled like a baby's; with parted dewy lips, and great masses of glossy bronzed plaits coiled away under the sweeping plume of her broad felt hat; a girl to take away your breath, and make you curse the mud on your boots, and the missing button on your ecclesiastical waistcoat.

"Lord ha' mercy!" quoth Mrs. Bosely, "if 't isn't my young lady. An' how be you, my dear?"

"All right, thanks," said Mrs. Bosely's young lady, in a cheerful, rather loud voice—as, without glancing at me, she shook the dame's stiff, wrinkled fingers in her small, lavender-kidded hand. "How is the rheumatism?"

"Mortal bad, miss, mortal bad!" replied Mrs. Bosely, delighted to begin all over again to a new auditor. "I can't abear 'em, an' that's the truth I tell you. They does crockle one up like."

"Ah, just what they were doing the last time I saw you, grannie," said the young lady, coolly. "And as they are no better, and that 'crockling' propensity must be very unpleasant, I'll tell you what I'll do. Have you ever heard of a Turkish bath?"

"A what, miss?" asked Mrs. Bosely, to whom the word "bath" sounded very much as it might to one of those hydrophobic hounds with whom Mr. Grantley Berkeley used to bore us so much a little while ago in the *Times*.

"A Turkish bath," repeated the girl, with cheerful distinctness, while I sat in silence—and did not laugh. "My uncle is older than you are, and has just had several, which have done him no end of good. You're put into hot water first, I think, and then cold is soused—"

"Water, m'm!" gasped Mrs. Bosely, almost speechless with natural disgust.

"Water, of course," replied her visitor. "What else? And then you're rubbed, and beaten, and your joints are cracked, and—I don't quite know what else; but you come out beautiful!"

Mrs. Bosely groaned faintly—

"I should come out dead," she said, solemnly; "it 'ould kill me on the spot."

"It would cure you," retorted the young lady. "You say the rheumatism is killing you now; so you must want to be cured, and I'll just bring a cab—"

"Look'ee here, miss," said Mrs. Bosely, coaxingly—she evidently had reasons for not offending her visitor by too abrupt a refusal—"that 'ere—cure 'ould cost mints."

"It costs something, of course," replied the girl; "but I shall pay that; and—"

"Miss Juliet!" cried Mrs. Bosely, almost driven to desperation, "I couldn't let you. It 'ould be wrong. There, now! We must all ha' patience, you know, miss, in this vale o' tears; and as my clergyman was just a sayin' to me, one 'ad ought to count it

a privilege to carry the crosses as is sent us."

"Oh, nonsense!" interrupted the girl, curtly—"it's all very well to carry crosses if you can't get any one to carry them for you; but, if you can, drop them and be thankful."

"An' then, miss, I do think as the rheumatics is betterin' a little—I do, indeed, miss. They aint so fixed like in the bones; an' I don't believe as I'd 'ave 'em at all if 'tweren't for that 'ere dratted door, as the draught dō cut me in 'alf, it do."

"Why, Mrs. Bosely, I sent some one to mend that door."

"Ah! an' indeed 'twas very good o' you, miss. A boy, he did come; but he made such a jawin' an' clatterin' round, I knowed as he couldn't do nothink; an', not to deceive you, m'm, I'm that shaky I can't abear worritin'."

"Why, you troublesome old thing," cried the girl, merrily, "he would have done it all right. Let me look at it."

And then she turned round, and espied me in my dark corner by the door.

"Why, who's this, Mrs. Bosely?" she asked, quickly. "Your widowed granddaughter? How do you do, my girl? and why don't you come and take care of your poor old—"

This was too much. I had already been shocked to the soul by this girl's levity; but to be taken for an ill-conditioned young woman! Anathematising from the bottom of my heart my classically hairless face and rigidly lengthy coat, I rose up, while Mrs. Bosely exclaimed—

"Why, lor bless you, dear! that be Mr. Jazible, my minister."

"I hope I am not in your way," I said, stiffly, seeing she had the grace to blush, but relenting because the blush made her so wonderfully pretty.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. — Jezebel. I—"

"Chasuble," I corrected, rather warmly.

"Mr. Chasuble, I really beg your pardon; but that corner is so dark, I could not see you properly. Perhaps you can tell me what is to be done for Mrs. Bosely's door."

Her manner was deliciously frank. I suggested that something nailed against the crack—

"The very thing!" she said, promptly. "A capital idea. One of those red flannel sausage things that men carry round in the

snow. Now, Mrs. Bosely, where can I get one?"

"Oh, don't 'ee trouble, miss," replied that individual, 'very uncomfortably. "It don't matter, the door don't. One gets used to 'em, somehow; and—"

"She likes it!" exclaimed the girl, indignantly. "She likes a draught. Mrs. Bosely, how can you? and at your age, too? Why, how old are you?"

"Sixty-eight, or som'ereabouts," Mrs. Bosely mumbled. "Now don't 'ee worrit, Miss Julit, dear. There aint no doin' nothink with that door nohow, there aint."

"Sixty-eight!" repeated Juliet (what a pretty name it was), "and you don't know how to stop a draught yet! Mrs. Bosely, I'm ashamed of you. And now I think of it, I saw some of those red sausage things in a little shop at the corner. Mr. Chasuble, would it trouble you to buy some for me? I would go myself, but I see it is drizzling, and rain takes all the curl out of my feather."

She extended a little velvet purse as she spoke; and of course I had to take it. It was hardly consistent with the dignity of a priest of the Church to be running errands for strange young ladies; but when those young ladies wear white ostrich plumes, liable to be uncurled by rain, drooping over their shining braids; and when they issue their commands in a sweetly royal tone, and smile on you so as to show two little, rosy dimples at the corners of their mouths, he would be hardly human who could refuse to sacrifice his dignity to their pleasure.

I did not refuse. I went out meekly, and I bought some of the "red sausage things" at the little shop. Had I not been senior curate, I would have carried them off like a coil of gigantic bloodworms over my arm. As it was, I made the shopboy carry them, and accompanied him back to Mrs. Bosely's. I don't know that there was any necessity for me to return there—except to return the purse, I forgot that. Of course I was bound to return the purse to its owner.

Mrs. Bosely's house consisted of one room, opening out of a sort of gutter called, as I have said, Jinks'-alley, a mere stream of mud trickling out of a filthy back street, and terminating in a cesspool and a dead wall. You stepped over an outlying puddle from the former to reach the door; and as I drew near I saw that it stood ajar, and that the entrance was blocked by a chair, sur-

mounted by a vision of two neat, high-heeled boots buttoned well up over a pair of neater ankles. I thought of St. Anthony, and shut my eyes, thereby nearly tumbling into the puddle before-mentioned. The boots disappeared, and Miss Juliet opened the door, with as radiant a smile as if we were old friends.

"Have you got them? Thanks. Well, you haven't been long" (very condescendingly); "and now we had better nail them up at once. I found some nails in Mrs. Bosely's cupboard. Oh, fancy her keeping her butter in a blacking pot!—and here's a flat iron for a hammer. I think you had better get up on the chair, and do the top part."

The ease with which this young lady delivered her commands was superb. I demurred feebly.

"I am afraid it will hardly hold my weight, Miss—Miss— Perhaps the boy—"

But the boy had put his burden down, and disappeared.

"Try," said the girl, with monosyllabic severity.

And I tried. What else could I do? The crazy article creaked terribly, and then gave a portentous snap.

Mrs. Bosely groaned.

"You had better get down again," observed my tyrant, calmly. "I did not know you were so heavy. Never mind. I'll do it, and you can hold the chair, and give me the nails."

She sprang up as she spoke. There was only a gentle creak this time. I thought of St. Anthony again; but how shut my eyes now when I had to hand her the nails? Such a pretty, little, plump hand, too, as took them! It went to my heart to see how often the flat iron came down on the soft, taper fingers instead of the refractory nail.

Mrs. Bosely groaned at intervals. She was evidently in the depths of depression. Three uncombed male heads blocked up the sooty little window without. Audible comments on "whatever parson wor up to with that 'ere swell girl," floated on the air. I felt hot, red in the face—not happy, by any means; and yet I was almost sorry when the task was done, and stepping down from her perch as lightly as a sparrow, she began to draw on her gloves with a triumphant—

"Doesn't your door look beautiful, Mrs.

Bosely? Now, don't you ever complain of a draught again."

"No, miss, that I never won't," said Mrs. Bosely, with prompt fervour.

"And if your rheumatism keeps bad, tell me, and we'll try the Turkish baths."

"Don't 'ee talk on't, miss. 'Taint nothink to speak on, it aint."

"All right. Good-bye, then, or I shall be too late for our 'At home.' Good afternoon, Mr. Chasuble. Much obliged for your help."

And so, with a shake of the crone's hand and a smiling nod to me, she was gone. How dark the room looked!

"Ladies never think as they're a keepin' us waitin' for our teas," grumbled Mrs. Bosely, ungratefully; and seeing her rise, and begin to fumble with a big, black kettle, I took the hint and departed likewise.

I also wanted my tea, or rather my dinner; and yet I was not so hungry now as I had been awhile ago. Out of the puddles of Jinks'-alley, through the dingy smuttness of Silver-street, past the sunlit bustle of Notting-hill, down a modest row of shops terminating in some equally modest lodging-houses, "giving" (as the French say) on a large dairy, a cabstand, a dissenting chapel, and a music shop; and so into my own abode, the first of the row of furnished apartments.

It had never occurred to me before; but *how* lonely the place looked!

Jane, the lodging-house slavey—a young damsel of plump form and smut-embellished face, clad in a dirty cotton frock, fastened with huge brass pins at the back, which pins had a trick of giving way and bursting out at the smallest provocation, and in a manner which was positively alarming when one regarded the amplitude of her proportions; with a huge chignon, composed of dusty black wool, over which occasional streaks of greasy light hair meandered capriciously; and ornamented by a flapping oval of ragged crochet always on one side—brought me my dinner—*i.e.*, a large fat chop, black without, crimson within, and swimming in a pond of oil and cinders; three humid potatoes, decorated with many black spots; and a segment of cold rice pudding with the mark of her thumb in one side—and spread it on the little square table before the fire. Anglican clergymen are not given to pampering the flesh; but it did not look inviting. Somehow I caught my-

self fancying the damsel of the white feather and sealskin jacket seated opposite to me, and shuddered at the idea of offering her a half of the gory chop! How would those rose-tipped little fingers like to use these dull, blackish-handled knives? Were they smarting from the flat iron now, I wondered.

This was too much. Did St. Anthony sit and dream of his temptress after she was gone? With a violent effort I rose, rang the bell, and resolving to banish mine with the dinner things, took up the *Times* and tried—very unsuccessfully—to bury myself in the report of a recent church congress.

I went to see Mrs. Bosely again in a few days—a very few days; but it is the duty of a curate to look after his flock; and why neglect this venerable sheep? She was alone this time, and though I stayed three quarters of an hour no one else entered; and as Mrs. Bosely appeared in low spirits, I tried to cheer her by alluding to that cheerful young person, Miss Juliet.

"My young lady," groaned Mrs. Bosely. "Ah! she be a terrible lively one, ben't she, sir?"

"Very lively, and amiable," I replied, cautiously. "You have no draught from your door now?"

"Ne'er a bit, sir. Wasn't that like her, now? It be 'most too stived a' present; an' I might ha' friz here all these years, and ne'er a one o' my visitin' gentry—savin' your presence, sir, as of course I don't mean you—would ha' thought o' doin' nothink to keep the cold out. Not they!"

This was ungenerous; also, considering the extreme ill-will with which Mrs. Bosely had submitted to her visitor's alterations, it was inconsistent. I smothered my feelings, however, and merely observed, with mild severity—

"Well, I trust you feel properly grateful for the kindness of Miss Juliet—a—what is her name?"

"Which indeed I don't know, sir, as it's a thing I never can remember is names: not as I could ever say hern, though she telled it me twice; and I knows as it had a devil—if you'll excuse it, sir—at the end on't."

"A devil!" I repeated, staring.

"Aye, sir, as is just what I said, an' with the selfsame look as you has on you now."

I felt flattered.

"'Miss Julit,' says I, 'that ben't your name, surely?'"

"Yes, grannie, it is," says she; 'and if you want to remember it, just you think of the old gentleman.'

"But no, m'm," says I, 'the Lord preserve me from thinking on any sich person as is a-goin' about like a roarin' lion seekin' whom he might devour. An', says I, 'if you'll excuge me, miss, I'll call you by your christenin' name instead,' which I allers do, sir, reg'lar. God bless her."

I too made up my mind to call her Juliet; for how could I—even taking St. Anthony into question—associate those laughing lips and rosy cheeks with the Prince of Darkness?
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THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

UP EARLY ON PURPOSE.

CORKSCREW staircases of stone, corkscrew staircases of iron, darkness and dust, beam and rafter, break-neck ladders, a tight squeeze between iron bars, another climb, and I was in a sort of barred cage, with the wind rushing furiously in my face, and the strange construction of iron and copper seeming to vibrate. Another climb of three or four feet, and my head was in darkness. I was in the great gilded ball of St. Paul's, and peering up higher still into the cross.

But I had come thus far to see London awaking from its slumbers; so, descending a foot or two, I was once more in the cage, some three feet in diameter, formed of the uprights which support the golden ornament of the cathedral, and looking east, west, north, and south of the Great City.

My first sensation was one of tremor. Was the structure safe? The next that of wonder, as my eye strove to pierce the distance, and to analyze the vast panorama spread around. It was some minutes before anything but a confused mass of clouds and buildings was visible; then starting out as it were, one by one, familiar objects, presenting an unfamiliar aspect, appeared. Away on the north a long line of heights—Highgate and Hampstead. On the south, gloomy and cold-looking, another range, and plainly showing what appeared to be an old-fashioned tea caddy between a couple of tall candlesticks, till a glint of sunshine showed the glassy structure of the Sydenham Palace.

Eastward, a forest of ships. Westward, the clock tower of Westminster, the Abbey, and St. Thomas's Hospital; while, as if to join these latter points of the compass, there was a wavy, mud-brown path, till, following it to my feet, it glimmered dimly as the bridge-spanned river.

I thought I had chosen a clear morning and an early hour, so as to see London before the smoke should obscure the prospect. Vain thought! Look where I would there was smoke rising; here as from some vast conflagration; there passing down in dense clouds before the morning breeze—rushing down into the streets, and eddying in currents, to rise up again a few hundred yards farther on. Far from being swept away, the grimy vapour circled round and round, floating in banks of cumulus shape, and settling among the taller buildings of the City.

Now there was a patch of blue sky and a burst of sunshine, but far below lay the smoke clouds, ever changing and altering the architectural landscape spread below the gilded crow's nest where I clung.

Gazing west, and trying to trace the path of the Thanksgiving Procession, the irregular street was visible, and recognizing familiar objects, I noted St. Bride's, St. Dunstan's, the Law Buildings by Fetterlane; and then, in an instant of time, they were blotted out by a curtain of smoke, which rolled and revolved, giving a glimpse of spire, and then gradually hiding it again, as the vapour seemed, with its next bound, to fill up the channel of the Thames, hiding the brown ribbon by the river-side, which not long before, I had made out to be the Embankment.

The cloud had lifted though a little to my right, and there was a drab path, wide, apparently, as a sheet of note-paper—the Viaduct; close by it the grey pile of Christ's Hospital and the four domes of the Meat-market, with the square, squat tower of St. Bartholomew's. And now for the first time came a puff of smoke, swept up by an eddy as high as where I clung. It stayed but a moment, but its odour was unmistakable, and then it was hurrying over the grey lead-covered roof of the Cathedral far below my feet.

Again, looking east—looking, in fact, wherever the curtain lifted—there was the shaving-brush-topped Monument, and a faint peep at the White Tower seen by the

masts in the Pool. Farther east, too, there was once a dim shadowing forth of the Kentish Hills—Greenwich way—but only for an instant; then all was smoke once more, rolling heavily about the houses, as one by one, in every direction, chimney after chimney began to vomit forth its contribution to the cloudy pall, which momentarily grew thicker and blacker.

There is the stump of St. George's Cathedral and the dome of Bethlehem. Nearer still to the left, square St. Saviour's, and egg-topped Borough Market. Bridges, too, with flies, apparently—only they are waggons—crawling over them; and now comes up a dull, loud roar, as of awakening life; yet for awhile it is but faint. Another break in the smoky cloud as it rolls aside, and this time there is a long, round-backed something, out of which a white ostrich feather seems to glide, and then develop into an early train from Cannon-street, crossing the river to London Bridge Station. An instant more, and the curtain falls to hide it away.

Where will the cloud lift next? For awhile all below on every side is misty and blurred; but the white stone of the book-trade buildings in Newgate Market shows itself; so does the great pile in St. Martin's-le-Grand.

Bow Church starts out suddenly now, like a grey spectre holding its watch down close to its side; and beyond, there is a muddle of little toy houses which must be the Bank, the Mansion House, and Exchange. There is a gap, too, marking the course of the new street leading to the Embankment; and then the eye is taken by what looks like a general attempt upon the part of the myriads of chimney-pots, aiming to form each for itself a cloudy canopy, till tons of soot must be floating in the air, and, in spite of eddyings, and curlings, and returnings, the whole vast cloud settles slowly in a great drift over towards Kent.

The noise now increases fast, rising and falling, till there is a roar from the street. Red vans and carts have given place to others of indescribable hue, the patter of horses' feet rises with a clear metallic sound heard above the roar, and in the nearer streets a stream of passengers can be seen hurrying along.

One more glance round from my lofty eyrie, and I see close below portions of the grey cathedral; slate and tile roof in ridge

and furrow; faint markings which show where there is street or lane; and then all beyond smoke—smoke—smoke, a dense, ever-rolling canopy of smoke, apparently a hundred feet in thickness; for up here all is clear and bright, as it is below, when I reach the now thronged streets of the awakened City.

AUSTIN CHASUBLE'S LOVE CHANCE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—II.

IT was not long before I saw Juliet again. In fact, our visiting routes appeared to coincide, for we were continually meeting, now in one house and now in another, and I cannot say that I was always edified by the words which fell from my fair acquaintance's lips on these occasions. She had a way of riding roughshod over anything which had the slightest approach to what she called "cant," and which were generally the pious sentences of resignation which many of my parishioners were at trouble to bring forth for my approval. She once spoke of Job as a "person of most unfortunately dirty habits;" and hoped that an old crossing-sweeper, with whom we were both acquainted, and who had Mrs. Bosely's objection to baths, both Turkish and otherwise, would not end by getting into the patriarch's condition. She read the Bible in as lively a tone as if it were a novel, and spoke of St. John's epistles as "jolly!"

Once I felt obliged to remonstrate with her, took the book into my own hands, and put it away. She stared at me with a lovely rising blush, and as we went downstairs said—

"Mr. Chasuble, did I offend you to-day?"

"Offend me? No."

"Then why—"

"I am afraid of your offending these people's principles by such expressions. Please don't be offended"—and indeed I was colouring violently—"but remember they do not know what you mean as well as I do. You would not like your heedless tongue to harm other people's souls, I am sure."

"Of course not; but— Who would mind what I say?"

"Everybody who knows and likes you as I—as you deserve to be liked."

When I got out into the street I felt hot

and breathless. What had I been on the point of saying? Nothing very dreadful; and yet I was thankful from the bottom of my heart that I had checked myself before saying it, and betraying—what?

Before I went to bed that night I was in love—in love with an irreverent little girl, with blue eyes and a dimpled cheek; and after this I became very unhappy. I loved, and yet I quarrelled with my love, rebuked it, turned away from it; and then, like a weak, inconsistent fool, took it in my arms and hugged it. Of course this latter proceeding was utter madness; for what had I, Austin Chasuble, in common with this wilful, impetuous, richly robed damsel? I did not even know her name, rank, or anything but that her manners were those of a lady, her dress that of one reared in the lap of luxury; and I did know, only too well, that I received a bare hundred a year as curate of St. Stephen's, and an additional fifty from my mother, the widow of the late very Rev. Dean of Bibchester, and still living with my sisters in a cosy house within the Cathedral close of that town. Now, stretch a hundred and fifty pounds as far as you may, I defy you to make it keep one person in luxury, let alone two. It might keep two, with painful economy, in some remote country parts; but in London! And then two so seldom remain two, and so often multiply themselves indefinitely.

What could I do?

The girl had fairly bewitched me; yet, like a madman, instead of avoiding her society, I sought it. I found out the days she visited the poor; and notonly devoted those to the same errand, but almost every other as well, lest I might by accident miss one chance of seeing her. Surcingle, the junior curate, said I left him nothing to do outside the church. He was perfectly correct in his statement.

Would I not have walked myself to death rather than let him incur the danger of meeting my bonny Juliet in the West-end slums? By degrees I grew thin and haggard, between combating with my love passion and trying to devise means for satisfying it—so haggard, indeed, that sometimes the bright eyes would look at me compassionately, and she would say—

"Mr. Chasuble, you look awfully ill. I don't believe you give yourself half enough food or rest. You ought to lay up, and have some one to look after you."

Ah! how gladly would I have laid up if I had had her to look after me: to look in once a week or so, as she did on Mrs. Gridlan, and ask me how I did, with that frank, inspiriting smile of hers.

Alas! when my ailment was comprised within the simple fact of my love for herself, how could her presence but aggravate instead of curing the evil?

Another time she hurt me cruelly by saying, as I was opening her umbrella for her—

"One thing I like so much in you Ritualistic clergymen, Mr. Chasuble, is your not marrying. It makes you so much more useful among the poor. You couldn't give all your time to them, as you do, if you had an exigante wife at home; and I always thought it one of the great advantages the Roman clergy possessed over ours."

It was like a knife through my heart that she should say this, and be glad of it; and with difficulty I commanded myself enough to reply—

"Celibacy, certainly, has its recommendations in some cases; but you must remember, Miss Juliet, it is wholly voluntary with us, not enforced as with the Roman priesthood."

"Then it is all the more right and sensible of you," she answered, warmly; and, shaking my hand, departed.

That night I felt desperately unhappy. It was perfectly true that hitherto I had regarded celibacy as my particular vocation; had extolled the benefits, mundane and spiritual, of that state; and enlarged, both at home and abroad, on the drawbacks and general inferiority of a married clergy. Indeed, if I ever condescended to admit any dreams in which woman took a part, she always appeared as a pale, spiritual creature, with lofty brow, deep violet eyes, and palely-golden hair banded Madonna-wise on either side of her transparent temples—some "rare, pale Margaret," or heavenly-minded Hilda, whose heart being already enclosed within the sacred atmosphere of the Church, might make a worthy helpmate to one of the pastors of that establishment.

Such was my ideal—an ideal on which I had more than once expounded in eloquent gravity to my admiring mother and sisters in the cathedral close at Bibchester, and to which I had in my college days inscribed various sonnets of varying excellence—sonnets in which the heroine's slight, pale fingers, inspired glance, and lily-like com-

plexion appeared on every page. And now, behold me!—"fallen, fallen, fallen from my high estate," and hungering mightily for a very flesh and blood damsel with saucy eyes and ripe lips—a damsel without a trace of either heavenliness, ill-health, or inspiration about her—a girl of the period, who talked enjoyingly of "delicious whitebait lunches at Greenwich," told her poor protégées that she looked pale of course because she had been dancing till morning at "such a jolly ball," and insisted, with honest deprecation of a higher motive, that she only visited the poor because it was "fun."

"One gets so awfully tired of rich, haw-haw, sleekly proper people, you know, Mr. Chasuble. They do get frightfully slow after a time; and so I come down among the slums now and then for a fillip, just as gourmands take a pill or a glass of bitters before dinner."

I remonstrated warmly against this. Fain, indeed, would I have made myself consistent by making an angel out of her; but she set down her foot, and would not have it at any price; so, as I might not love a saint, I e'en lay down in the dust and worshipped a sinner. Aye, good heavens, how I worshipped her! and I did not even know her name!

One day I betrayed myself.

She had mentioned on one occasion that she always went to see Mrs. Bosely on a Friday. I went to see Mrs. Bosely on a Friday also. Fasting days are, I consider, peculiarly adapted to works of charity; and accordingly we encountered each other one afternoon at the entrance of Jinks'-alley, just as it was coming on to rain.

"Barely in time for shelter," she said, without stopping; and I only lifted my hat smilingly in return, and hurried on to get the dame's door open. She came scudding in after me, laughing and shaking the rain-drops off her skirts; and I had taken the umbrella from her before either of us noticed that the room was empty save of ourselves. Mrs. Bosely had gone out; and as our baffled eyes met each other in their return from the vain search, there must have been something ludicrous in the situation, for we both laughed.

"It seems we have come on the same errand," I said, colouring consciously.

"It seems we are always coming on the same errand," she retorted. "I was just thinking to-day that I never come to see

my old people without finding you too, Mr. Chasuble; but I hardly calculated on finding only you."

"You forget they are my people also," I said, vexed with myself for reddening still more under her words—"if not more so than yours. It is my business to look after them."

"Your business and my pleasure. Well, both combined bring us together pretty often."

"Not so often as to be unpleasant to you, I hope," I said—as anxiously, poor fool, as if my life hung on the answer.

"Certainly not, Mr. Chasuble—I rather like it, though you do scold me about Job, and trample on all my little pet weaknesses."

"Not very hardly, I think, Miss Juliet—I hope not, at least."

"I don't know," she answered, giving her head a little wilful shake as she stood drying the soles of her boots at the small fire. "However, I am resigning myself to being trampled on to-day, for I must wait till the rain is over, and I want to wait till Mrs. Bosely comes in. I shouldn't like to go away without bidding the ridiculous old thing good-bye."

"Good-bye!" I repeated, vaguely. Some of the rain must have run down my back just then—such a cold shiver ran through me. "You are not—surely you are not going away!"

She looked up, her blue eyes wide with surprise. My tone must have sounded of the despair I felt.

"Indeed I am. Don't think I'm tired of my ragged friends; but I leave London next week, and I shall be too busy to come down to them again; so you will have them all to yourself in the future."

I felt I was growing white as death. I could not speak or look at her.

"I am afraid you are rather glad," she said, brushing the dried mud stain off her boot with one of Mrs. Bosely's dusters. "But I haven't corrupted your flock very much. I think I say worse things when you are there than when I'm alone."

Still no answer. The words would not come.

"I know I did say, 'The nearer the church the farther from God,' when Mrs. Gridlan said so long as she could hear St. Stephen's bells and see you she wouldn't repine at not going to church," the girl went

on, with a sort of mirthful penitence; "and I burst out laughing when that fat old Mrs. Ball told me she felt like a 'sparer on a 'ousetop.' But it is so difficult not to laugh, isn't it? And how does a sparrow on a housetop feel?"

Some one felt lonelier than any sparrow on a housetop just then, and found it rather difficult not to burst out crying into the bargain.

"You will have to forgive me, now I am going," she said, drying the other sole with great care. "I feel quite sorry you are not going away somewhere, too. You must want a holiday."

A holiday when my work was connected with her!

"Are you going for long, Miss Juliet?" I asked, rather hoarsely.

"Oh, I am going for good. At least, I am not coming back to live in London again."

"Not at all! Oh! Juliet, shall I never see you again?"

The words broke from me without any will of my own.

It was vain attempting to restrain them; and only when they were spoken I knew by the rush of colour to her face what I had done.

"Forgive me—do forgive me!" I stammered, brokenly. "I never meant—but it seemed so sudden. To lose you altogether! I cannot bear it. I——"

"Mr. Chasuble," she interrupted, blushing very much, but speaking in a kind, womanly tone, "surely you are not going to say anything foolish. If you are, pray stop."

"Is it foolish to love you?" I exclaimed, losing my head altogether.

And then, in the same moment, it rushed over me how utterly foolish—nay, insane—such love was; and I sat down by the rickety little table, and burying my face in my hands, groaned aloud at my own madness.

She came close to me, and said in her coaxing, pleasant voice—

"Mr. Chasuble, pray don't. Of course I forgive you. You did not mean anything. You are a little over-tired, that's all. Pray don't take it to heart."

Nothing could be more generous, more kindly ladylike; but I would not take the indulgence. Every tone of her liquid voice fanned my passion; and I burst out again, not looking at her.

"I did mean it. I do mean it. I love you, foolishly if you will, but with all my heart. How could you not see it? Why, it has been Heaven even to be near you, though I knew I could never win you—a poor curate, without even enough to keep himself. And you so fair, so——" I choked. I was fairly crying like a baby, with my face still hidden. "I know I ought not to tell you. I never meant to. It was enough to see you now and then; but if you go——"

"Poor fellow!" she said, as pitifully as if I had been Mrs. Ball's crippled grandson, and laying her little gloved hand on my bowed head. "I'm so sorry. I never guessed it, indeed. Of course it was very foolish; and how you could—but you'll soon get over it."

Her well-meant consolation only stabbed me more keenly. The rain fell in a constant "spit, spit" down the chimney on to the hot coals. A mangy hen sauntered into the room, and commenced pecking at my boot-heels. The wet from our two umbrellas trickled together in a little pool on the muddy floor.

"I would give my life to win you," I sobbed out, ashamed to lift my head; "and I cannot, I cannot."

"No, you can't," she said, firmly. Then after a moment, in which I did not speak, "I think I had better go away."

Another silence; then, in a softer tone—

"Don't cry. Please, please don't. I'm not worth it a bit, and I'm so sorry! Oh! you poor boy! I wish you wouldn't—I am so very, very sorry!"

The coaxing fingers glided from my head to the hands which covered my face. I felt their kindly clasp for a second; then a light, gentle touch, like the brush of a rose-leaf on my forehead, and—she was gone!

Before I could reach the door she was almost at the entrance of the alley, and I knew I had lost her.

I went home that day feeling like a man who has passed through Heaven, and lost it for ever. Only the touch on my forehead remained to save me from utter misery. If I had had one grain of common sense, I might have known that it was the seal of my condemnation, the surest sign that she did not and could not love me as I loved her, for one single moment; but I was mad—mad as only a man who loves vainly can be.

A telegram was lying on my lodging-

house table. I did not even notice it till evening, I was too wretched; but when the girl came in to lay the cloth she pointed it out to me, and I tore it open. It was from my mother, summoning me to Bibchester on important business. Of course I hurried off by the first train on the following day; and on my arrival was informed that the rector of Farleycombe—a pretty, rural village about three miles from Bibchester—was just dead; and my mother had prevailed with the patron, an old friend of her own, to offer me the living.

An income of six hundred a year mine in one day.

Of course I had to stay some days in Bibchester to settle matters. Nearly ten indeed had elapsed before I returned to town to bid adieu to St. Stephen's, and seek out Juliet. Yes, come what might, I had resolved to find her, and implore her to try and love me sufficiently to give up her gay London life, and share my own comfortable, if quiet home, among the green and sunny Kentish hopfields. Naturally, with this view, I went first to Mrs. Bosely.

"An' you be a-goin away too, sir!" cried the dame, when I told her the news. "Well, I never! Seems like as I'll be left all alone; an' my rheumatic's that bad my legs is swollen right up, an' the perspiration runs off me in streams, it do. Yes, sir, I had to take they things off the door, they did make it so dratted 'eavy, an' stuff the air up so; and now Miss Julit's gone—God bless her—she won't take no offence."

"Then she is gone?" I asked, half expecting it, and making up my mind to follow her.

"Gone!—eh, yes, sir, all the way to Italy, she and her husband; though whatsumdever they wants in that Popish place I can't imagine for the life o' me. Ah! she were a darling, she were. Just 'ee look at the piece o' cake she sent me. Aint it a big lump? An' there's her letter, which there's summut about you in it, for sure."

I only glanced at the wedge of iced and luscious cake; but I took the thick sheet of creamy paper, and read it steadily through. I was past emotion now.

"DEAR MRS. BOSELY," it said—"This is to bid you good-bye; for I am going to marry my cousin, Lord Danescourt. We have been engaged for more than a year, and now he won't wait any longer, but insists on

carrying me right away from London; so I am going, and shall not see you any more. Don't forget me, and mind to wish me joy over the cake and wine. Also bid Mr. Chasuble good-bye for me. I liked him very much.—Always your hearty friend,

"JULIET MANDEVILLE."

That was ten years ago, and I am unmarried still. I am more than ever convinced that celibacy is the only right and proper state for the priesthood, and make that condition a sine qua non with my curates. But I keep Juliet Mandeville's note hidden away in the depths of my desk; and the touch of her fresh lips has kept me from all others ever since. It may be she was the innocently cordial, pitiful child I fancy her. It may be she was only a careless coquette, amusing herself with an idle flirtation. I only know hers was the first girl-kiss that ever pressed my brow, and none has ever brushed it away.

LOST KEYS.

TEN shillings reward.—Lost, a bunch of keys. Whosoever will bring the same to the office of this paper, will receive the above reward."

It was very annoying, but there was no help for it. I had lost them, and awkward as it was, I could neither tell how nor where. The more I puzzled about it, the more confused I became. As a last resource, I sent off the advertisement to the paper, and sat down to think. "Lost keys"—how the words I had written reiterated themselves that evening as I mused in the twilight.

"Lost keys!" How many keys one loses in the course of a lifetime! Those early keys we never dreamt of losing—the keys that unlocked the sympathies and affections of school-day friends. How mysteriously they disappeared! There was a time when one could rely upon ward answering to ward, as night follows the day. No boyish trouble was so heavy but a glance at Harry could reveal it all, and lighten it in doing so. And the quick gleams of mutual joy when brighter scenes appeared, how prompt and full they were! Never shall I forget the unutterable fun and glee in my old chum's face when, at his instigation, I escaped from Old Dan, the ogre of the school, by bolting like an arrow 'twixt the straddling legs of the bewildered old man, as he came rolling to-

how anxious we are at once to preserve our dignity and gratify youthful inquiry. Time was when, driven in by dint of tasks and studies Herculean, we deemed it the one thing in the world utterly impossible, to make us ever forget where the Straits of Babel Mandeb lay. Did we not achieve promotion to the lowest place in the class on one occasion by loudly proclaiming them "at the bottom of the Red Sea"?—though the expression was but a literal description of their locale on the map suspended from the wall. And now how fretful and pettish you are obliged to be to prevent your youngest son from perceiving your inability to tell him the diameter of the globe. One always remembers the circumference, from the frequency with which we heard it compared to the rind of an orange, and the ardent desires we indulged to become possessed of a specimen of that favourite fruit, which should offer anything so tempting as 25,000 miles of succulency.

Lost keys! Why, their name is legion—like the sands on the shore, they are not to be numbered. Who shall tell of lost latch-keys, with the awful storms they called forth next morning; lost watch-keys, and the consequent loss of 'buses, trains, and business; lost keys of beer or wine cellars—only the cat always gets these; lost keys of jewellery—keys we find it convenient to have lost when visited by our richer friends; keys lost that once unlocked the secret store of home affection and domestic bliss? No, thank God, these are not lost; and whatsoever else we lose, if these be left, life is not drear and sad, but bright, and loving, and beautiful, and joyous, in spite of any number of lost keys.

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ME AND MY DOGS.

SPOT.

"IS your master at home?"

"No, sir; please, he's gone down the town."

No sooner were the words uttered than a shaggy setter, that had been quietly giving me a wag of recognition, bounded by me, dashed down the gravel path, out of the

gate, and then along the road towards the town as hard as he could bound.

"There, sir—now who'd ha' thought o' that, him going off in that way, when master's gone sick visiting and didn't want the dog wi' him? He knows as well as could be what it meant when I said down town; and now he'll find master out, and he'll be so cross, master will, when he gets back."

"Didn't he know that the vicar was out?" I said.

"Bless you, no, sir!" said the girl. "When master don't want Spot along wi' him he slips off; and then, as soon as the dog has hunted about from room to room and can't find him, he begins to whine and chunther about, and would run off to look for him, only we keep one o' master's old hats on purpose, and bring it out and show it him, when he thinks master aint gone out, and goes and lies down by the fire. We did so this morning, and he was as good as could be until you came, sir, and he heard me say down town, when you saw how he shot off; and I couldn't help it, sir—now, could I, sir?"

As a matter of course, I sided with the vicar's maid, Jane; and then, following the example of the dog, I retraced my steps towards the town, and in ten minutes had forgotten all about vicar, dog, maid, and her account of Spot's instinct; but I was roused to a recollection of what I had heard by the dog himself, who came full rush out of the surgeon's garden, and darted off towards a private residence a little back from the road, on the other side. Here, however, he was also unsuccessful in finding the object of his quest, and, amused by his eagerness, I watched the dog go from garden to garden, and from house to house, in search of his master, but still without success. Now he looked up the street and now down; he peered into every shop that his master frequented; and every now and then, as if some sudden thought had seized him, he would bound off in a fresh direction.

Perseverance seldom goes unrewarded. After a good half-hour's search, Spot must have found out where his master sojourned, for I saw him sitting quietly outside Widow Whitman's door—a sure index that the vicar was within.

There was a certain pleasure, no doubt, attached to the possession of so intelligent an animal as Spot, but it must have been unpleasant at times to have so shadow-like

a companion, without the shadow's convenience; for, as I afterwards learned from the vicar himself, it was a work of difficulty to get away without Spot, and he corroborated in every particular the maid's statements.

But he was a capitally behaved dog was Spot, and he bore the best of characters in the village from everybody but such ladies as kept cats. It would be a hard task, no doubt, to find out the origin of the enmity between the canine and feline races; for though we may see instances in domestic life of its being overcome, yet there is the inborn dislike, and it was strongly developed in Spot, though to the vicarage cat he was amiability itself. Doubtless he had other weak points; but the special failing of Spot was cats, and the appearance of a furry tabby, sandy or black, set the dog off full race to chase the clawing animal on to some wall or up the bole of a tree, where he would lie down panting, his red tongue lolling out of his mouth, but with a graceful curl up at the end, and watch his enemy for hours.

But all cats were not afraid of him, and before now I have known a fierce Tom turn at bay, swelling his tail out into the likeness of a bottle-brush, arching his back till all four legs were close together, and then, spitting and swearing, glowering with distended eyes and bristling with fierceness, as he offered battle in a way which Spot invariably refused; while more than once he has been known to retire with nose bleeding from the effects of a rapid "one, two," delivered like lightning upon either side, and in painful proximity to Spot's eyes.

Upon such occasions Spot would stand still for a moment, looking hard at his enemy, and then beat a retreat, with head turned over shoulder; but if, ceasing his warlike, defensive attitude, Tom recommenced flight, Spot was after him directly, following up his attack until the cat was in safety.

He has been known to slay cats; but as a rule such matters were hushed up, and the vicar tried hard to break him of his propensity, but in vain. It was rather a scandalous matter that at such an abode of peace and goodwill as the vicarage a killer of cats should be harboured, but so it was; and more than one lady who had been outraged in her feelings by the loss of cat or kittens informed me that her conscience would not allow her to go to church in consequence, and that she considered herself to have been regu-

larly driven to chapel by that dog. The vicar always said that he did not believe it, for there must have been a previous lurking after the meeting-house, and that the dog had been seized upon as an excuse.

Ill-natured people talked largely at the inoffensive old gentleman, because he did not have the dog shot; but the vicar said he would not have him shot if he killed every cat in Bubbley, for they were always scratching in his flower beds and destroying his choicest seeds. And, besides, he said that he believed it to be all his own doing, through once setting Spot after a black and white vixen that he had found in the greenhouse, and who demolished half a dozen pots of geraniums before she was driven out.

"He never used to take any notice of cats till then," said the vicar; "so why should I have him killed for what is my fault?"

"Try a muzzle," I suggested.

But the old gentleman only shook his head; and I must confess that I do not think it would have looked what he used to call seemly, for an elderly clerical gentleman to go out with a dog that was obliged to be muzzled. Certainly, dogs are muzzled sometimes during the hot months, with an idea that it is safer, and to give confidence to nervous people; but as a rule the mouth straps are put on to prevent unnecessary slaying of brother dogs, or combats with other animals.

Spot never interfered with brother dogs, always passing them in a quiet, serious manner especially his own; but he had a slight leaning towards cows, taking an occasional run in the fields where they were and causing a terrible commotion, and no doubt anti-lacteal excitement, as, with heads down and tails up, the sleek butter-producers would break into a lumbering gallop, to Spot's intense delight so long as the cows ran; but come a stoppage, and let some long-horned dame, instead of running, turn and look wonderingly at the disturber of the peace of the pasture, and Spot would, as in the case of cats, suddenly remember that he was wanted elsewhere, and begin to trot back, with the cows formed into a semicircle, and following him up closely; now and then, too, indulging in a frisk or lumbering bound which seemed to somewhat startle Spot, and hastened his steps till he was outside the gate, over which the cows would stretch their heads and stare until he was out of sight.

Spot had many friends, even though, like the rest of the world, he had his enemies. He was always a well-fed dog; but at various places in the village he could command a bone if he wanted one, by way of a lunch, or to amuse himself between meals. But no one took greater interest in him than old Mrs. Barley, the sexton's wife; who, however, proved rather too good a friend, often nearly killing the poor dog with kindness. For Mrs. Barley was particularly fond of what is vulgarly termed "quacking;" and when she could not find a human being upon whom to try her nostrums, she would physic the vicar's dog. Poor old soul, she had never heard of homœopathy, which would have proved a blessing in her case; since very few shillings would have fitted her out with a complete set of globule bottles, and she might have doctored and doctored, and never injured the constitutions of any of her patients.

But the science of homœopathy had not invaded the little village of Bubbley Parva, and Mrs. Barley used to prescribe herbal and mineral remedies—the minerals being confined to two, Epsom salts, and that strangely scented powder, milk of sulphur; while as to the herbal, it was wonderful what she would do with camomile tea. I knew one medical man who prescribed chlorodyne for sixty per cent. of the maladies he had to cure; and another who pinned his faith to iodine and its combinations, and, no doubt, with justice. But Mrs. Barley's great specific was camomile tea, and where she did no good she certainly did very little harm; while in a great many cases the two old women—Mrs. Barley and Dame Nature—between them often patched up a man, to the great injury of old Joe Barley's trade.

So whenever Mrs. Barley saw Spot panting rather heavily or a little rough in his coat, she coaxed him in, and, to use her own words, "made him a mess," which the dog obediently lapped up.

"He has his odd times and ailments, like other folks, poor fellow," then Mrs. Barley would observe to her neighbours, and no doubt she did Spot a great deal of good; while it must be admitted that the old woman's kindness was genuine, and without hope of fee or reward.

No doubt the vicar looked askance at Spot when he was said to have been the cause of Mrs. Fink's or Miss Stacey's seat being vacant in the old church; but the old

gentleman was rather far-seeing, and labouring away at his quiet, practical old sermons, he knew well enough that the stray sheep would return to his fold after a few months' absence; for no parishioner who left the church could ever stand the local preachers at the chapel for more than six months without returning to the mother building for tonic doses from the vicar to restore his shattered religious nerves. The men, no doubt, meant well, and considered that they had had calls to the work; but for all that it was rather painful to sit and hear Mortiss, the carpenter, hammering and stammering, and introducing his favourite elocutionary form of questioning, "Is it becoss—is it becoss?" or Black, the tinman, who took a text, and then hammered awhile before putting it in a sort of mill, and then—blind old horse that he was—going round and round in the same old circle, till half his audience had sought refuge in sleep. Then there was Bracebit, the tailor, a very strong man in "the church," a pale, serious man, who adopted semi-clerical vests of his own make, and always wore white cravats of the stiffest and broadest—the man who, before dazzling his hearers with the glories of Heaven, led them to it by degrees, and introduced them to the palace "where Queen Victoria was seated upon her throne, her crown upon her head, and surrounded by her brilliant courtiers with their enchantments," whatever those enchantments might be. It was very irreverent to think so, no doubt; but after the enchanting description of her Majesty, some of his hearers would have been rather disappointed if they had gazed upon the plainly dressed widow lady who sits at the head of this vast empire. They might have been disposed to exclaim, like the old countryman in the song upon being introduced to a sight of George III.—

"Is that the King that I sees there?
I seed a chap at Bartlemy Fair
More like a King than that chap there."

But Bracebit meant well, though he always divided his sermon into six parts, and then contrived to get those six parts and their threads hopelessly entangled before a quarter of the hour he always allowed himself had elapsed. His discourses were always a hopeless maze to himself and to those who listened, though he never lacked fluency, but kept on without a pause, lead-

ing you here and there, and showering down quotations upon your head. He would take you into his maze at Genesis, and then, after a weary wander, bring you out somewhere amongst the Epistles; for, in spite of his efforts, he never reached Revelations. He often took it as a starting point, being rather fond of the imagery the book contains; but upon these occasions he travelled backwards, if he did not always.

"We can preach without a book, eh, Mr. Black?" he would say to the tinman; and then they would both laugh pleasantly at the want of ability in the grey-headed old university man, who always took his clearly written, carefully worded sermons into the pulpit with him, and preached calmly, earnestly, and practically for about five and twenty minutes; while Spot lay patiently winking in the porch, with his head resting upon one of old Joe Barley's big boots, till the last word was uttered, when he would jump up and trot round to the vestry door, and wait for his master's advent.

The old vicar saw matters in their real light; and though he objected to Spot's cat hunts, yet he knew well enough that no quiet, thoughtful person would leave the old worship for so trivial a cause, and judged correctly enough that matters would right themselves. He never told the recanting ones of their failings, but had many a quiet chuckle to himself upon the weakness of human nature in general.

There were some houses where Spot was welcome for his master's sake, and some where he was not; and by means of his delicate, sensitive organization the dog could tell where he should enter and where refrain; consequently, there were a number of nooks and corners where, some time or another in the afternoon, you would find Spot—generally pleasant, dry, sunny niches, where he could bask in the sun while waiting for his master, ready to trot on to the next calling-place. And when Spot was on duty after this fashion, he was a fixture pro tem. No wanton dog could tempt him away, no friendly whistle, no travelling cat. Why, he would not even stir for a bone; and, if you wished him to partake of your bounty, you must place it within reach. Spot seemed to consider that his master was under his charge, and a strong, religious sense of duty undoubtedly pervaded the dog's being; while it was rare indeed that you encountered the venerable old gentle-

man without the dapple-coated dog being close at his heels. Visiting, gardening, it was all the same; while the task of carrying a glove seemed to make the dog supremely happy. Why, there was a stained place in the middle of the vicar's old silk umbrella, caused by Spot carrying it crosswise in his mouth, like a huge bitt, and getting his head wrenched first on one and then upon the other side, as he encountered legs and posts in his travels. He was especially clever with a cross-handled basket, and was often the bearer of fruit or some other token of the old gentleman's kindness to his parishioners—carrying it carefully to its destination—sure now of a welcome when the vicar raised the latch to admit him to the cottage they sought.

"I taught un to pull ta little bell, the ting tang, sir," Joe Barley said. "Ta vicar always used to get to ta church at ten minits to 'leven, and then ta dog would come to me, and I let him hold o' ta end of ta rope. He never did no good, sir, only tugged, I rung; but pleased un, and he'd pull away like owt. He were a good dog, sir; and we kep' him ta six months he lived arter vicar died, and I never told nobody, sir. But when owd Spot giv' up—bein' always ailin' like arter his maester died, and the missus never able to do him no good wi' her brewins—when he giv' up and died, I says to myself, I says, 'You were nobbut a beast, Spot, and 'taint right 'praps, but I'm part maester here, and no one need know nowt about it.' So I shoulthers my owd mattock and shovel, and I makes him a little grave close aside the owd vicar's vault; and that's where owd Spot lies, raight or wrong—bein' ta first dog I ever know'd buried in ta churchyard."

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

VERY FISHY.

DOUBTER concerning whitebait, I referred to a work of natural history, wherein I learned that the Latin name was *Rogenia alba*; that it belonged to the family *Clupeidæ*; that it was distinguished by having teeth on the palate, and pterygoid bones on the vomer, and on the tongue. Now all this was very scientific, but it was

not interesting; so I tried Greenwich, entered one of the well-known inns and partook of refreshment, served by a waiter like a sequestered rector, of severe aspect, and with a white cravat that was stiffened to crackling point.

"Do you know anything about whitebait, waiter?" I asked, mildly.

"Whitebait, sir, yessir! One whitebait Number 4 d'reckly!"

I turned hastily to see my friend taking his lips from a tube, and what could I do? Nothing but wait till the savoury dish was served. There would be something gained though, I thought; the waiter would be more communicative. So without regret I sat till "one whitebait Number 4" was served, and partook thereof with enjoyment.

"Where does the supply come from?"

"Supply, sir?"

"Yes, the supply. Where do they get the whitebait?"

"Oh, the whitebait, sir? Yessir, *they ketches 'em!*"

I thanked my friend the waiter, and felt disposed, out of spite, to impart the knowledge I had gained from my natural history; but I refrained, and sought elsewhere for information. I sought until I obtained it, of about the wettest, muddiest, slimiest, red nosest, most unpleasant specimen of humanity to be found smelling of brackish weed between London Bridge and Gravesend. He was in a boat "doing his pipe," as he termed it, otherwise smoking it, and upon being accosted bestowed a look that was as fishy as his aspect. He was quite ready, though, to talk about whitebait, and came ashore, scraping nothing off his great boots upon the muddy stone stairs, against which Father Thames lapped slimily as he stealthily wound his way amongst the vessels moored head and stern in the pool.

"Whitebait," he said; "yes, I ketches whitebait, and brings 'em up myself. I'm only in a small way. Most on it's caught and sent up by rail in these here."

"These here" were two little flat, shallow, tray-like boxes, the fac-simile of one that I had seen an hour before at a Billingsgate salesman's, full of tiny silvery fish of the length of the little finger, and not distinguishable to common eyes from sprats in a state of infancy.

"Yes; they comes up by rail, them does, and I sends mine so sometimes," said the old fellow, "when I can't get a run up behind

a tug or a steam launch; for, you see, these here whitebait is for the swells, and it's a trade as is done in a hurry. If your little trunk of fish aint up to market early in the morning 'taint no use—they spoil d'reckly. I'm one of the hereglar ones, and I sells here or at Grinnidge or Gravesend, according to how time serves. How do we ketch 'em? Little mashed nets—bag nets. Sets 'em across the water when the tide's coming up or going down, and they swims right into your net and gets into the bag part, and never gets out any more till we take 'em. They swims in schools, you know; comes right up the river, and we gets 'em miles away both sides of Gravesend. They seems, like some men as I knows, to like half-and-half, only they like water—half salt, half fresh; and they may talk as long as they like about what they are, they're only little sprats, and if we left 'em alone they'd grow to big sprats; and I aint sure as big sprats wouldn't get bigger till they got to be herrin's.

"Waries a deal, they do; sometimes we get a rare lot, and sometimes they're skeecer. Pretty well they've been to-day, and they've been selling 'em for two shillin's a quart in the market. Sometimes, though, they're as much as five bob a quart, for swells will have 'em in the season, and there's obliged to be some for 'em. What do I get for 'em? Oh, all sorts of prices—that aint neither here nor there; but if I was to say I had a shillin' a quart for mine all round this mornin' I shouldn't be far out. I've had more'n that afore now, and I aint had half so much; and I have knowed the time when I've had to chuck a lot away—pitched 'em bang into the river, for they turns queer sooner than nothing.

"It's been like this, you see; there's been no chance to get 'em up to London time for the market, and all the places at Woolwich and Blackwall got as much as they want. They won't buy more'n they can do with—you may trust 'em for that; for 'taint a thing as they want to have common and cheap. It's swells' meat, you know, whitebait is, and they like to keep it for swells. They're curus little fishes, though, is whitebait, and the fresh water seems too strong for 'em. Up they comes with the tide, and down they comes with the tide, just as if the fresh water drove 'em back. And they're so aggravatin'. Here, say I've got an order for two of them boxes, you'd think I'd only have

to set a net and ketch 'em. Why, bless you, you may set yer nets and row about early in the morning, up and down, and across here and across there, sometimes till you're sick, and not get none. I dessay it's better about Gravesend; but, you see, I work as near London as I can, and get my takes sold at Greenwich and Blackwall, only going down Gravesend way sometimes. If I'd my time to come over again, I'd never take to fishing, for it's the coldest, and wettest, and unsartinest trade under the sun, when there is any, and that aint often for them as fishes, seeing as we do our work in the night and early morning."

There were more boxes of whitebait being received by the salesmen on passing once more through the market, each full of the silvery delicacy, and the brackish old man was right in his quotation of sales, for the whitebait was being disposed of at two shillings a quart. A good look at the tender little leaves of silver—for such they seemed to be—only appeared to confirm the old fisherman's story about their being young sprats, though naturalists would say that this is a vulgar error. At any rate, the supply is small, choice, and, if not rapidly sold, deteriorates so fast that, whether they be a species to themselves, or only fry, fried they never are.

ANGUISH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

EDITORIAL.

SHOULD this meet the eye of the fair author of the following pages, the Editor begs to inform her that, in obedience to her wishes, the MS. has been carefully revised, and is now laid before the sympathizing of her sex. Will she kindly call for copies as the "tears" appear, and grant the editor an interview, at which auspicious time he hopes to have the pleasure of returning the stamped leather reticule bag which contained the MS., and in addition a cambric handkerchief marked in red hair A. de C., four skeins of Berlin wool, a tatting shuttle, and a volume of Tennyson, annotated in pencil. These were evidently left unintentionally, and are of no use to any one but the owner.

The original text has been adhered to as far as possible; but it is evident that too pointed a style of caligraphy was favoured at the Cedars, so pointed a style that the

Editor found it utterly impossible to decipher some of the impaled words. However, he has filled up the spaces with the best at his command, and feels convinced that in no case has he departed from the strict meaning of a sentence.

TEAR THE FIRST.

"EXCELSIOR."

THOUGH what the world would call young, my life would fill volumes—thick volumes—with thrilling incidents; but a natural repugnance to publicity forces me to confine myself to the incidents of one single year, whose eventful hours were numbered—whose days were one chaos of excitement or rack of suspense. How are the scenes brought vividly before my mind's eye as I turn over the leaves of my diary, and recognize a tear blister here, a smear there, or find the writing illegible from having been hastily closed when wet, on account of the prying advance of some myrmidon of tyranny when the blotting paper was not at hand. Faces so familiar rise before me, to smile or frown, as my associations with them were grave or gay. Now I shudder, now I thrill with pleasure; now it is a frown that contracts my brow, now a smile curls my lip; while the tears, "Oh, ye tears!"—by the way, it is irrelevant, but I have the notes of a poem on tears, a subject not yet hackneyed, while it seems to me to be a theme that flows well—"tears, fears, leers, jeers," and so on. Oh, if I had only possessed yellow hair and violet eyes, and determination, what I might have been! If I had only entered this great world as one of those delicious heroines, so masculine, so superior, that our authors vividly paint—although they might be engravings, they are so much alike. If I had but stood with flashing eyes a Lady Audley, a Mrs. Armistage, the heroine of "Falkner Lyle," or any other of those charming creatures, I could have been happy in defying the whips and stings, and all that sort of thing; but now, alas! alack!—ah, what do I say?—my heart is torn, wrecked, crushed. Hope is dead and buried; while love—ah, me! But I will not anticipate. I pen these lines solely to put forth my claims for the sympathy of my sex, which will, I am sure, with one heart, throb and bleed for my sorrows. That my readers may never need a similar expression of sympathy is the fond wish of a wrecked heart.

I am now eighteen, and dwelling in a wilderness—Chester-square is where papa's residence (town residence) is situated. But it is a wilderness to me. The flowers coaxed by the gardener to grow in the square garden seem tame in colour and inodorous; the gate gives me a shudder as I pass through, when it grinds with the dust in its hinges, and always loudly; while mischievous boys are constantly inserting small pebbles in the key-hole to break the wards of the key. It is a wilderness to me; and though this heart may become crusted with bitterness, and so hardened and callous, yet never, ah! never, will it be what it was a year ago. I am writing this with a bitter smile upon my lips, which I cannot convey to paper; but I have chosen the hardest and scratchiest pen I could find, I am using red ink, and there are blurs and spots upon the paper* where the tears have removed the glaze—for I always like very highly glazed note.

I did think of writing this diary in my own life's current, but my reason told me that it would only be seen by the blackened and brutal printers; and therefore, as I said before, I am using red ink, and sitting writing by the front drawing-room window, where it is so much lighter, where the different passing vehicles can be seen, and the noise of those horrid men saying "Ciss, ciss" in the mews cannot be heard.

Ah! but one year ago, and I was happy! I recall it as if but yesterday. We were sitting at breakfast, and I remember thinking what a pity it was to be obliged to sit down, and crease and take the stiffening out of the clean muslin I wore, and that really seemed almost perfection as I came downstairs, when suddenly mamma—who was reading that horrible provincial paper that ought to be called the *Réchauffé*, for it never contains anything but what we have had before in a better form—mamma stopped papa just as he had a spoonful of egg up to his lips, and made him start so that he dropped a portion upon his whisker.

"Excelsior!" exclaimed mamma.

"Which is?" said papa, making the table-cloth all yellow.

"Only listen," said mamma, and she commenced reading an atrocious advertisement, while I was so astonished at the unwonted vivacity displayed, that I left off skimming

* Fact. There was considerable difficulty in transcribing.—ED.

the last number of "All the Year Round," and listened as well while she read the following dreadful notice:—

"The Cedars, Allsham.—Educational Establishment for a limited number of young ladies"—(limited to all she could get). "Lady principal, Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount"—(an old, wretch); "French, Monsieur de Cochonet; German, Fraulein Liebeskinden; Italian, Signor Fazzoletto; singing, Fraulein Liebeskinden, R.A.M., and Signor Fazzoletto, R.A.M." (the result of whose efforts was to make us poor victims sing in diphthongs or the union of vowels, Latin and Teutonic); "pianoforte, Fraulein Liebeskinden; dancing and deportment, Monsieur de Kittville; English, Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount, assisted by fully qualified teachers. This establishment combines the highest educational phases with the comforts of a home"—(Now is it not as wicked to write stories as to say them? Of course it is; and as, according to the paper, their circulation was three thousand a week, and there are fifty-two weeks in a year, that wicked old tabby in that one case told just one hundred and six thousand fibs in the twelvemonth; while if I were to analyze the whole advertisement, comme ça, the amount would be horrible)—"Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount having made it her study to eliminate every failing point in the older systems of instruction and school internal management, and having formed the present institution upon a basis of the most firm, satisfactory, and lasting character." (Would you think it possible that mammas who pride themselves upon their keenness would be led away and believe such nonsense?) "The staff of assistants has been most carefully selected—the highest testimonials having in every case been considered of little avail, unless accompanied by tangible proof of long and arduous experience."

Such stuff! And then there was ever so much more—and there was quite a quarrel once about paying for the advertisement, it came to so much—about forks and spoons and towels, and advantages of situation in a sanitary point of view, and beauty of scenery, and references to bishops, priests, and deacons, deans and canons, two M.D.s and a Sir Somebody Something, Bart. I won't mention his name, for I'm sure he must be quite sufficiently ashamed of it by

this time, almost as much so as those high and mighty peers who have been cured of their ailments for so many years by the quack medicines. But there, mamma read it all through, every bit, mumbling so dreadfully, as she always has ever since she had those new teeth with the patent-base.

"Well, but there isn't anything about excelsior," said papa.

"No, of course not," said mamma. "I meant that it was the very thing for Laura. Finishing, you know."

"Well, it does sound pretty good," said papa.

And then, after a great deal of talking and arguing, in which of course mamma must have it all her own way, and me not consulted a bit, they settled that mamma was to write to Allsham, and then if the letter in reply proved satisfactory, she was to go down and see the place; when, if she liked it, I was to spend a year there for a finishing course of education; for they would not call it—as I spitefully told papa they ought to—they would not call it sending me back to school; and it was too bad, after promising that the two years I passed in the convent at Guisnes should be the last.

And besides, I could not help it if my grammar was what papa called, in his slangy way, "horribly slack." I never did like that horrid parsing, and I'm sure it comes fast enough with reading. Sœur Celine never found fault with my French grammatical construction when I wrote letters to her, and I wrote one that very day; for it did seem such a horrid shame to treat me in so childish a way. And while I was writing—or rather, while I was sitting at the window, thinking of what to say, and biting the end of my pen—who should come by but the new curate, Mr. St. Purre, of St. Vestment's; and when he saw how bitter and touched I looked, he raised his hat with such a sad smile, and passed on.

By the way, what an improvement it is, the adoption of the beard in the church. Mr. St. Purre's is one of the most beautiful black, glossy, silky beards ever seen; and I'm sure I thought so then, when I was writing about going back to school—a horrible, hateful place! How I bit my lips and shook my head! I could have cried with vexation, but I would not let a soul see it; for there are some things to which I could not stoop. While, after the first unavailing remonstrance, if it had been to

send me to school for life, I would not have said another word.

If it had been a ball, or a party, or fête, the time would have gone on drag, drag, dawdle, dawdle, for long enough. But because I was going back to school it must rush along like an express train. First, there were the answers back to mamma's letters, written upon such stiff thick paper that it broke all along the folds; scented, and with a twisty, twirly monogram thing done in blue upon paper and envelope; while the writing—supposed to be Mrs. de Blount's, though it was not, for I soon found that out, and that it was written, like all the particular letters, by Miss Funness—was of the finest and most delicate, so fine that it seemed as if it was never meant to be read, but only to be looked at, like a great many more ornamental things we see every day done up in the disguise of something useful.

Well, there were the letters answered, mamma had been and declared to papa that she was perfectly satisfied, for everything was as it should be, and nothing seemed outré—that being a favourite word of mamma's, and one out of the six French expressions she remembers, while it tumbles into all sorts of places in conversation where it has no business. I did tell her, though, it seemed outré to send me back to one of those terrible child prisons, crushing down my young elastic soul in so cruel a way; but she only smiled, and said that it was all for my good. And then came the day all in a hurry; and I'm sure, if it was possible, that day had come out of its turn, and pushed and elbowed its way into the front on purpose to make me miserable.

But there it was, whether or no; and I'd been packing my boxes—first a dress, then a tear, then another dress, and then another tear, and so on, until they were full—John said too full, and that I must take something out or they would not lock; but there was not a single thing that I could possibly have done without, so Mary and Eliza both had to come and stand upon the lid, and then it would not go quite close, when mamma came fussing in to say how late it was, and she stood on as well; so that there were three of them, like the Graces upon a square pedestal. But we managed to lock it then; and John was cording it with some new cord, only he left that one, because mamma said perhaps they had all better stand on the

other box, in case it would not lock; while, when they were busy about number two, if number one did not go off "bang," like a great wooden shell, and burst the lock off, when we had to be content with the cords.

Nobody minded my tears—not a bit; and there was the cab at the door at last, and the boxes lumbered down into the hall, and then bumped up, as if they wanted to break them, on to the roof of the cab; and mamma all the while in a regular knot trying to understand "Bradshaw" and the table of the Allsham and Funnleton Railway. Papa had gone to the City, and said good-bye directly after breakfast; and when mamma and I went out, the first thing mamma must do was to take out her little china tablets and pencil, and put down the cabman's number, when if the odious, low wretch did not actually wink at me—such insolence!

When we reached the station, if my blood did not quite boil when mamma would stop and haggle with the horrible tobaccoey wretch about sixpence of the fare, till there was quite a little crowd, when the money was paid, and the tears brought into my eyes by being told that the expenses of my education necessitated such parsimony; and that, too, at a time when I did not wish for a single fraction of a penny to go down to that dreadful woman at Allsham. But that was always the way; and some people are only too glad to make excuses and lay their meannesses upon some one else. Of course, I am quite aware that it is very shocking to speak of mamma in this way; but then some allowance must be made for my wretched feelings, and, besides, I don't mean any harm.

TEAR THE SECOND.

THE CEDARS, ALLSHAM.

I SINCERELY hope the readers of all this do not expect to find any plot or exciting mystery; because, if they do, they will be most terribly disappointed, since I am not leading them into the realms of fiction. No lady is going to be poisoned; there is no mysterious murder; neither bigamy, trigamy, nor quadrigamy; in fact, not a single gamy in the book, though once bordering upon that happy state. Somebody does not turn out to be somebody else, and anybody is not kept out of his rightful property by a false heir, any more than a dreadfully good man's wife runs away from him with a very wicked roué, gets injured in a railway acci-

dent, and then comes back to be governess to her own children, while her husband does not know her again. Oh, no! there is no excitement of that kind, nothing but a twelve-month's romance of real life; the spreading of the clouds of sorrow where all was sunshine; the descent of a bitter blight, to eat into and canker a young rosebud. But there, I won't be poetical, for I am not making an album.

I was too much out of humour, and too low-spirited, to be much amused with the country during my journey down; while as to reading the sort of circular thing about the Cedars and the plan of operations during the coming session, now about to commence, I could not get through the first paragraph; but every time I looked up, there was a dreadful foreign-looking man with his eyes fixed upon me, though he pretended to be reading one of those Windsor-soap-coloured paper-covered *Chemin-de-Fer* novels, by Edmond About, that one buys on the French railways. Of course we should not have been subjected to that annoyance—shall I call it so?—only mamma must throw the expenses of my education at my head, and more; and say it was necessary we should travel second class, though I'm sure papa would have been terribly angry had he known. I had my tatting with me, and took it out when I laid the circular aside; but it was always the same—look up when I would, there were his sharp, dark, French-looking eyes fixed upon me; while I declare if it did not seem that in working my pattern I was forming a little cotton lace framework to so many bright, dark eyes, which kept on peering out at me, till the man shouted out "Allsham, Allsham," where the stranger also descended and watched us into the station fly.

Mamma said that if we came down second class, we would go up to the Cedars in a decent form; and we did, certainly, in one of the nastiest, stably-smelling, dusty, jangling old flies I was ever in. The window would not stop up on the dusty side, while on the other it would not let down; and I told mamma we might just as well have brought the trunks with us, and not left them for the station people to send, for all the difference it would have made. But mamma knew best, of course, and it was no use for me to speak.

But I wish to be just; and I must say that the Cedars was a very pretty place to look

at, just outside Allsham town; though of course its prettiness was only for an advertisement, and not to supply home comfort to the poor little prisoners within. We entered by a pair of large iron gates, while upon the pillars on either side were owls, with outstretched wings—put there, of course, to remind parents of the goddess Minerva; but we all used to say that they were likenesses of Mrs. Blount and the Fraulein. There was a broad gravel sweep up to the portico, while in front was a beautiful velvet lawn and a couple of cedar trees, whose graceful branches swept the grass.

"Mrs. and Miss Bozerne," said mamma to the footman, a nasty tall, thin, straggly young man, with red hair that would not brush smooth, and a freckly face, a horrible caricature of our John, in a drab coat and scarlet plushes, and such thin legs that I could not help a smile. But he was terribly thin altogether, and looked as if he had been a page boy watered till he grew out of knowledge, and too fast; while he clung to the door in such a helpless way, when he let us in, that he seemed afraid to leave it again, lest he should fall.

"This way, ladies," he said, with a laugh-and-water sort of a smile; and he led us across a handsome hall, where there were four statues and a great celestial globe hanging from the ceiling—only the globe hanging; though I'm sure it would have been a charity and release for some young people if a few of the muses had shared the fate of the globe—at all events, that four. First and foremost of all was Clio. I wish she had been turned into a date tree!

"This way, ladies," said the tall creature, saving himself once more from tipping over, by seizing the drawing-room door handle, and then, as he turned and swung by it, sending the blood tingling into my cheeks by announcing—

"Mrs. and Miss Bosom."

THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

BIRD-CATCHERS' MARKET.

SEEING the discussion now going on in the papers about the capture of small birds, and also that men have been summoned and fined for bird-catching, fancy suggested that a little casual observation of the matter would not be out of place; so, wending—as Harrison Ainsworth or G. P. R. James would have said—our steps in the right direction, our ears were soon greeted by a call—"Pink—pink—pink!" "Pink—pink—pink!" on all sides: that sweet, familiar old bird-call that one has heard hundreds of times beside some budding wood in spring-time; and then the little, cheery, jerking song of the chaffinch, as it challenges and answers cock-bird after cock-bird, throwing down its gage, and summoning, with flourish of trumpet, some rival to the fray.

But there is no pleasant sunny woodland, with tender green leafage, here; and for awhile, though the challenge and song are incessant, no birds are visible; for this is Club-row on a Sunday morning, and we have come down Scater-street, looking up at great dingy casements where Spitalfields weavers have plied the silk loom any time these hundred years. There are shops, too, here and shops there, but whence comes the bird-call?

It is a puzzle for a few moments, till "Pink—pink—pink!" there it is again, and undoubtedly out of that square, handkerchief-covered bundle that dirty youth has under his arm. In fact, this is a small cage, tied closely up in a handkerchief that once possessed a colour—now has none.

One's eyes open wider, too, and one sees that in these tolerably crowded thoroughfares, certainly two out of every six men and lads carry each a cage, tied up in a handkerchief, and in this cage is what is here termed a "pegging finch," so named from its being secured by a string to a peg, the said peg being driven into a tree, countryward, and other pegs, anointed with bird-lime, being disposed above and below.

The lively little bird soon utters its spring challenge, and rivals come around to the

attack, but only to get their plumage sullied and fastened with the filthy gluten, when they become the prey of the bird-fancier, or the gentle youth of Spitalfields, Shoreditch, and Bethnal-green, who make matches with them—bird to sing against bird—the greatest number of strains in so many minutes.

There is a strange, dreamy, shuffling, slouching aspect amongst the people here. Very little talking, but a general carrying about of birds in handkerchiefs. Boys, too, are in the crowd: one has a mangey-looking cock, in a state of perennial moult; another a half-blind puppy, who seems to have had a glimpse of the world, and to like it so little that he shut his eyes again. There is a goat here, and its kid; and, close behind, a lad with a whitey-brown hen with a sardonic cast of countenance, as if she rejoiced in being bought by people to lay eggs, and had never laid any for the last eight or ten years. She evidently knows, too, that she is quite safe, for it would be labour in vain to kill her, unless she could be converted into fiddle-strings. It may have been fancy, but certainly that hen seemed to divine one's errand, and wink and wink, as much as to say, like Mr. Lionel Brough, "Vat a larks!"

There is quite a promenade here, of a very slouchy character though, and the promenaders are wholly of the masculine gender—people who stop to gaze in the windows of the places of business, which are all open as far as shutters are concerned. This, about the cleanest of all, bears the announcement, "Purveyor of Pigeons to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales;" and here are specimens in the window of the soft, iridescent-necked, dove-eyed birds which fall to the aristocratic guns at Hurlingham and Wormwood Scrubs.

"Pigins, sir," says a man in shirt sleeves—shirt sleeves is full morning costume here—"Pigins, sir, just now's dear; we couldn't let you have pigins for less nor eightin shillins a dozen."

"And sparrows?"

"Sparrows, sir? Two shillings a dozen."

An enlightenment this, for who would have thought a pert, sooty, perky sparrow to be worth twopence, current coin of the realm?

In this window, where there is a crowd of boys making "putty noses" against the dirty glass, are nests after nests of young birds—larks, blackbirds, yellow-beaked and callow, gaping as if they took every flattened nose for an adhesive snail; starlings crying

so sadly for the parent birds that never respond with slug, grub, or wireworm to their call. Here, too, in the next shop window, are cages of fowls, each cage a veritable "Little Ease" to the unfortunate prisoner, who gives a doleful peck every now and then at nothing, as if nature prompted it to the effort to sheer off paralysis of the spine. Heap upon heap here, like green cheese-plates, are clover sods, fresh cut somewhere in the country, for the prisoned larks, bare of breast, that beat against their wires, stare up at the solitary patch of blue, and flapping idle wings, trill out their matin lay far sweeter than the hoarse voices of a well-meaning party of black-clothed young men and maidens, who parade the street singing a hymn, whose burden is "I love Jesus."

Shop after shop, with heavy, coarse-featured men gazing on imprisoned pigeons—runts, dragons, tumblers, jacobins, bald-heads, and blue rocks—with their stolid gaze. This window is quite a centre of attraction, for it contains a philosophic-looking hedgehog, making the best of things in his spiny armour; and on the opposite side of the way is a round, dirty, feathery ball, which performs two hops to and fro, and looks uncommonly lively, but it requires no slight stretch of the imagination to believe that it is a jay. Sickly cocks, dilapidated hens in cages, mice in wired boxes, greenfinches, yellowhammers, and "nightingales in full song," but that song is not heard.

There is trade done here, too, in refreshments, the most popular being brandy-snaps—a kind of sugary glue—and periwinkles, which youths, who have a pint in a dirty cap, wriggle out with pins, and devour in the presence of hungry birds, who make a pardonable mistake in supposing them to be grubs. There is a man, too, here with a gaudily-painted van, having taps and glasses at the back, and inscriptions respecting the cures performed by sarsaparilla and valerian. He sells rapidly tumblers full of a beery-looking compound, which is drunk with great gusto at a penny per glass, and froths liberally as it is drawn. There is not much sociability, but a general conspirator-like aspect of the men and lads bearing the wrapped-up "pegging finches"—a look as if they had bombshells which they feared would go off; but above all, loud and clear, comes the tuneful, sharp "pink, pink," resounding down Club-row and its adjacent birdy streets.

ANGUISH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

TEAR THE THIRD.

IN A STATE OF IGNORANCE.

ANY one with a heart beating beneath her own can fancy our feelings. Of course I am aware that some unfeeling, ribald men—I do not include thee, oh, Achilles!—would have turned the wretch's blunder into a subject for jest; but thanks to the goddess of Bonheur, there was none of the race present, and Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount came mincing forward, smiling most benignly in her pet turban.

A dreadful old creature—I shall never forget her! Always dressed in black satin, a skin parting front, false teeth, and a thick gold chain hung over her shoulders; while the shocking old thing always thrust everything artificial that she wore right under your eyes, so that you could not fail to see how deceptive she was. She was soon deep in conversation with mamma; while I looked wearily round the room, which was full to overflowing with all sorts of fancy work, so that you could not stir an inch without being hooked, or caught, or upsetting something. There were antimacassars, sofa cushions, fire screens, bead mats, wool mats, crochet mats, coverings for the sofa, piano, and chimney-piece, candle screens, curtains, ottomans, penwipers—things enough, in short, to have set up a famous fancy fair. And, of course, I knew well enough what they all meant—presents from pupils who had been foolish enough to spend their money in buying the materials, and then working them up to ornament the old tabby's drawing-room.

Well, there, then, I don't care. It's the truth; she was a horrible old tabby, with nothing genuine or true about her, or I would not speak so disrespectfully. She did not care a bit for her pupils, more than to value them according to how much they brought her in per annum, so that the drawing-room boarders—there were no parlour boarders there, nothing so common—stood first in her estimation. I felt so vexed that first day, sitting in the drawing-room, I could have pulled off the old thing's turban; and I'm sure that if I had the false front would have come with it. There she was, pointing out the different crayon drawings upon the wall; and mamma, who cannot tell a decent sketch from a bad

one, lifting up her hands and pretending to be in ecstasies. And do you mean to tell me that they did not both know how they were deceiving one another? Stuff! Of course they did, and they both liked it. Mamma praised Mrs. Blount, and Mrs. Blount praised mamma and her "sweet child;" and I declare it was just like what the dreadful American man said in his horrid, low, clever book—that was so funny, and yet one felt ashamed at having laughed—where he writes to the newspaper editor to puff his show, and promises to return the favour by having all his printing done at his office; and papa read it so funnily, and called it "reciprocity of allaying the irritation of the dorsal region," which we said was much more refined than Mr. Artemus Ward's way of putting it.

I was quite ashamed of mamma, that I was, for it did seem so little; and, oh! how out of patience I was! But there, that part of the interview came to an end, and a good thing too; for I knew well enough a great deal of it was to show off before me, for of course Mrs. Blount had shown mamma the drawings and things before. So then we were taken over the place, and introduced to the teachers and the pupils who had returned, and there really did seem to be some nice girls; but as for the teachers—of all the old, yellow, spectacled things I ever did see, they were the worst; while as for the German Fraulein, I don't know what to say bad enough to describe her, for I never before did see any one so hook-nosed and parrotty.

Then we went upstairs to see the dormitories—there were no bed-rooms—and afterwards returned to the drawing-room, when the lady principal kissed me on both cheeks and said I was most welcome to her establishment, and I declare I thought she meant to bite me, for her dreadful teeth went snap, though perhaps, like mamma's, they were not well under control.

Then mamma had some sherry, and declared that she was more enchanted with the place than she had been at her last visit; and she hoped I should be very happy and very good, and make great progress in my studies, when Mrs. Blount said she was quite certain that I should gratify my parents' wishes in every respect, and be a great credit to the establishment; and I knew she was wondering all the time how many silk dresses and how many bonnets I had brought, for everything about the place was show, show always, and I soon found out how the plainly

dressed girls were snubbed and kept in the background; while as for Miss Grace Murray, the half teacher, half pupil, who had her education for the assistance she gave with the younger girls, I'm sure it was shameful—such a sweet, gentle, loveable girl as she was—shameful that she should have been so ill-treated, and I'm sure I speak without prejudice, for she never was any friend of mine, but always distrusted me, and more than once reported what I suppose she was right in calling flippant behaviour; but I could not help it, and I was dreadfully wicked while at the Cedars.

At last the fly bore mamma away, and I wanted to go to my dormitory, to try and swallow down my horrible grief and vexation, which would show itself; while that horrible Mrs. Blunt—I won't call her anything else, for her husband's name was spelt without the "o," and he was a painter and glazier in Tottenham Court-road—that horrible Mrs. Blunt kept on saying that it was a very proper display of feeling, and did me great credit; and patting me on the back and calling me "my child," when all the time I could have boxed her ears well.

There I was, then, really and truly once more at school, and all the time feeling so big, and old, and cross, and as if I was being insulted by everything that was said to me. The last months I spent at Guisnes the sisters made pleasant for me by behaving with a kind of respect, and a sort of tacit acknowledgment that I was no longer a child; and, oh, how I looked back now upon those quiet, retired days! Of course they were *too* quiet and *too* retired; but then anything seemed better than being brought down here; while as to religion, the sisters never troubled themselves about my not being the same as themselves, nor tried to make a convert of me, nor called me heretic, or any of that sort of thing; though it was quite dreadful to hear Aunt Priscilla go on at papa when I was at home for the vacations, telling him it was sinful to let me be at such a place, and that it was encouraging the sisters to inveigle me into taking the veil; and that we should soon have the Papists overrunning the country, and relighting the fires in Smithfield, and all such stuff as that; while papa used very coolly to tell her that he most sincerely hoped that she would be the first martyr, for it would be a great blessing for her relatives.

That used to offend her terribly, and mamma

too; but it served her right for making such a fuss—the place being really what they called a pension, and Protestant and Catholic young ladies were there together, while plenty of them were English; and the old sisters were the dearest, darlings, quietest, loveablest creatures that ever lived, and I don't believe they would have roasted a fly, much more an Aunt Priscilla.

* And there I was, then, though I could hardly believe it true, and was at school; and, as I said before, I wanted to get up to my dormitory. I said "my," but it was not all mine; for there were two more beds in the room. But as soon as I got up there, and was once more alone, I threw myself down upon my couch, and had such a cry. It was a treat, that was; for I don't know anything more comforting than a good cry. There's something softening and calming to one's bruised and wounded feelings; just as if nature had placed a reservoir of tears ready to gently flood our eyes, and act as a balm in times of sore distress. It was so refreshing and nice; and as I lay there in the bed-room, with the window open, and the soft summer breeze making the great cedar trees sigh, and the dimity curtains gently move, I gazed up into the bright blue sky till a veil seemed to come over my eyes, and I went fast asleep.

There I was in the train once more, with the eyes of that foreign-looking man regularly boring holes through my lids, until it was quite painful; for, being asleep, of course I kept them closely shut. It was like a fit of the nightmare; and as to this description, if I thought for a moment that these lines would be read by man—save and except the tradesmen engaged in their production—I would never pen them. But as the editor and publisher—I beg the editor's pardon,* I do not class him with the tradesmen—will be careful to announce that they are for ladies only, I write in full.

First of all the eyes seemed to be quite small, but, oh, so piercing; while I can only compare the sensation to that of a couple of beautiful, bright, precious stone seals, making impressions upon the soft wax of my brain. And they did, too—such deeply cut, sharp impressions as will never be effaced. Well, as I seemed to be sitting in the train, the eyes appeared to come nearer, and nearer, and nearer, till I could bear it no longer; and I

opened mine to find that my dream was a fact, and that there really were a pair of bright, piercing orbs close to mine, gazing earnestly at me, so that I felt that I must scream out; but as my lips parted to give utterance to a shrill cry, it was stayed, for a pair of soft, warm lips rested upon mine, to leave there a soft, tender kiss; and it seemed so strange that my dream should have been all true.

But, there, it was not all true; though I was awake and there were a pair of beautiful eyes looking into mine, and a pair of soft, red lips just leaving their impression; while, as I was fighting hard to recover my scattered senses, a sweet voice whispered—

"Don't cry any more, dear, please."

And then I saw through it all, for the dear girl who had just spoken was Clara Fitzacre; while just behind, and staring hard at me with her great, round, saucer eyes, was a fat, stupid-looking girl, whose name I soon learned was Martha Smith—red-faced and sleepy, and without a word to say for herself; while as for Clara, I felt to love her in a moment, she was so tender and gentle, and talked in such a consolatory strain.

"I'm so glad to find that you are to be in our room," said Clara, who was a tall, dark-haired, handsome girl. "We were afraid that it would turn out to be some cross, frumpy, stuck-up body, weren't we, Patty?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the odious thing, whose words all sounded fat and sticky. "I thought you said you wouldn't have anybody else in our room. I wish it was tea-time."

"But I should not have said so if I had known who was coming," said Clara, turning very red. "But Patty has her wish, for it is tea-time; so sponge your poor eyes, and let me do your hair, and then we'll go down. You need not wait, Patty."

Patty Smith did not seem as if she wished to wait; for she gave a great, coarse yawn, for all the world like a butcher's daughter, and then went out of the room.

"She is so fat and stupid," said Clara, "that it has been quite miserable here; and I'm so glad that you've come, dear."

"I'm not," said I, dismally. "I don't like beginning school over again."

"But, then, we don't call this school," said Clara.

"But it is, all the same," I said.

"Oh, no," said Clara, kindly; "we only

* Granted.

consider that we are finishing our studies here, and there are such nice teachers."

"How can you say so!" I exclaimed. "I never saw such a set of ugly, old, cross-looking—"

"Ah, but you've only seen the lady teachers yet. You have not seen Monsieur Achille de Cochonet, and Signor Fazzoletto—such fine, handsome, gentlemanly men; and then there's that dear, good-tempered, funny little Monsieur de Kittville."

I could not help sighing as I thought of Mr. St. Purre, and his long, black, silky beard; and how nice it would have been to have knelt down and confessed all my troubles to him, and I'm sure I should have kept nothing back.

"All the young ladies are deeply in love with them," continued Clara, as she finished my hair; "so pray don't lose your heart, and make any one jealous."

"There is no fear for me," I said, with a deep sigh; and then, somehow or another, I began thinking of the church, and wondering what sort of a clergyman we should have, and whether there would be early services like there were at St. Vestment's, and whether I should be allowed to attend them as I had been accustomed. And then I sighed and shivered, while the tears filled my eyes; for it seemed that all the happy times of the past were gone for ever, and life was to be a great, dreary blank, full of horrible teachers and hard lessons. Though, now one comes to think of it, a life could not be a blank if it were full of anything, even though they were merely lessons.

I went down with Clara to tea, and managed to swallow a cup of the horribly weak stuff; but as to eating any of the coarse, thick bread and butter, I could not; though, had my heart been at rest, the sight of Patty Smith devouring the great, thick slices, as if she were absolutely ravenous, would have quite spoiled my repast. At first several of the pupils were very kind and attentive, but seeing how put out and upset I was, they left me alone till the meal was finished; while, though I could not eat, I could compare and think how different all this was from what I should have had at home.

After tea I was summoned to attend Mrs. Blunt in her study—as if the old thing ever did anything in the shape of study but how to make us uncomfortable, and how to make

money—and upon entering the place, full of globes, and books, and drawings, I soon found that she had put her good temper away with the cake and wine, as a thing too scarce with her to be used every day. The reason for my being summoned was that I might be examined as to my capabilities; and I found the lady principal sitting in state, supported by the Fraulein and two of the English teachers—Miss Furness and Miss Sloman.

I bit my lips as soon as I went in, for, I confess it freely, I meant to be revenged upon that horrible Mrs. Blunt for tempting mamma with her advertisement; and I determined that if she was to be handsomely paid for my residence at the Cedars, the money should be well earned. And now, once for all, let me say that I offer no excuse for my behaviour; while I freely confess to have been, all through my stay at the Cedars, very wicked, and shocking, and reprehensible.

"I think your mamma has come to a most sensible determination, Miss Bozerne," said Mrs. Blunt, after half an hour's examination. "What do you think, ladies?"

"Oh, quite so," chorused the teachers.

"Really," said Mrs. Blunt, "I cannot recall having had a young lady of your years so extremely backward."

And then she sat as if expecting that I should speak, as she played with her eyeglass, and occasionally took a glance at me; but I would not have said a word if they had pinched me.

"But I think we can raise the standard of your acquirements, Miss Bozerne. What do you say, ladies?"

"Oh, quite so," chorused the satellites, as if they had said it hundreds of times before; and I feel sure that they had.

"And now," said Mrs. Blunt, "we will close this rather unsatisfactory preliminary examination. You may retire, Miss Bozerne."

I was nearly at the door—glad to have it over, and to be able to be once more with my thoughts—when the old creature called me back.

"Not in that way, Miss Bozerne," she exclaimed, with a dignified, cold, contemptuous air, which made me want to slap her—"not in that way at the Cedars, Miss Bozerne. Perhaps, Miss Sloman, as the master of deportment is not here, you will show Miss Laura Bozerne the manner in which to leave

a room. Your education has been sadly neglected, my child."

This last she said to me with rather an air of pity, just as if I was only nine or ten years old; and, as a matter of course, as I was rather proud of my attainments, I felt dreadfully annoyed.

But my attention was now taken up by Miss Sloman, a dreadfully skinny old thing, in moustachios, who had risen from her seat, and began backing towards the door in an awkward way, like two clothes-props in a sheet, till she contrived to catch against a little papier maché work table and overset it, when, cross as I felt, I could not refrain from laughing.

"Leave the room, Miss Bozerne," exclaimed Mrs. Blunt, haughtily.

And of course I made my way out of the room to where Clara was waiting for me; and then we had a walk out in the grounds, with our arms round each other, just as if we had been friends for years; though you will agree that it was very likely I should cling to the first loveable thing which presented itself to me in my then forlorn condition.

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SCENTED WITH LAVENDER.

DEATH THE TERRIBLE.

A PATCH of turquoise blue, above a crumbling, sun-baked, yellow wall; a grey cat, with blinking green eyes, on the top of the said wall; a tuft of dark-red wallflowers, with one broken twig swaying backwards and forwards in the warm noon-day breeze—so much and no more I see from the semi-cool depths of my chintz-covered pillows. How hot it is everywhere, and how still! Not a sound but the drowsy ticking of the kitchen clock below; not a cloudlet on that bit of dazzling blue; not a flicker in Grimalkin's lashes. The very flies speckling yonder yellow wall seem to have got tired of buzzing round, and to have settled down for their noonday sleep.

Will that restless branch of orange-coloured blossoms never leave off flapping to and fro against the dusty bricks; never tire of bruising the bright petals, and battering the pale stem? For more than an hour it has never ceased to beat against the cruel wall, till now the stalk is nearly cut through, and the tuft of green and gold dangles by one torn fibre. If I could rise, I would stretch out my hand to pluck the poor mutilated flower out of its agony, and put it in this glass of cold (no, tepid) water beside me; but, alas! that is out of my power, and—

There! one last heave, and in a moment spray and flower gone, fluttering down on to the hot pavement of the courtyard. Pussy opens her eyes, stretches her round neck, and goes to sleep again. The flies rise into the air in a tiny black cloud, and then settle back. There is a glimmer of something green on the dusty flags below, and all is quiet and at rest.

Rest! What a wonderful thing it is! Fancy such a trifle as that having power to disturb one, or a feeling of peace coming over the mind with that motionless sprig of gaudy blossoms in the courtyard. Perhaps it is only the fretful irritability of sickness; or perhaps my inborn dislike to the sight of suffering, which makes me breathe more freely now that flower is gone. Better it should drop and die, and fade away under the warm, blue sky, than go on beating out a bruised, mangled life against the unyielding stones. Better for us, far better, to drop and die, and be at rest, rather than go on struggling and fighting for a brief day more of life—a handful of toilsome, weary existence.

The philosophers of the first French Revolution christened death "an eternal sleep." The Arabs of the desert have an old proverb, "Man is better sitting than standing, lying down than sitting, dead than lying down." The Pagans of Greece and Rome carved beautiful marble figures of sleep over the doors of their mausoleums, and

bore their dead crowned with myrtle and attended by soft music to the grave. Indians and savages, whose whole life is a struggle and a battle, not alone with their own race, but with the beasts of the forest, and even Nature herself, sit down in calm, uncomplaining placidity to await the approach of death. Why is it, I wonder, that among Christians only, and more especially Christians of our own day, the physician of all our ills should be regarded as a King of Terror; and the one natural, imperative, immutable, and universal ending to every life, good or bad, pleasant or painful, should be shunned, ignored, and dreaded with a childish terror—a shrinking repugnance and loathing far beyond that awakened by the direst pains or punishment of existence?

We all know that, at best, life is a short and difficult journey. We all long now and then for the fulfilment of that verse, so dear to many an aching, tired heart, "Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." We actually, in the Burial Service, do thank God for delivering our brothers from the miseries of this world. We are fretted by unkindness, chafed by poverty, martyred by bodily suffering; and yet—yet we cling to life as if the mere fact of existence were as great a blessing to be desired as dissolution is a curse to be feared and avoided. And not only young and thoughtless people, but grown men and women—Christians, strong and sensible in all else, suffering, world-worn human beings—all, or nearly all, share this strange, irrational perversity.

Why on earth should this be? God knows, not I; and yet, if you won't be shocked, I fancy, do you know, that it is greatly owing to our pastors and masters, and to the teachings instilled into us from our earliest infancy. Every member of the English Church is taught to thank God for his, or her, "creation, preservation," &c., and to pray that this preservation may be, among other evils, from "sudden death." Well, in my heart of hearts, I never say either prayer without a mental negative both against the blessing and the punishment aforementioned. We thank God for our creation. Yes, and perhaps it is as well to do so, for it is His work, and "all the works of the Lord are good;" but we should thank Him equally for our extinction. Had we never been created we should have lost nothing, for we should never have been

cognizant of anything to lose. We should have suffered nothing, neither sinned nor sorrowed. No ill could ever have come to us, for we should never have been. Now, with our creation, we are indeed given the chance of a bliss beyond all human ken; but that bliss is only to be purchased by a life of toil and pain—can only be reached through the merciful gates of Death; and yet we cry out at its approach, and fret and struggle and fight for a few days more of an existence which must come to an end some day, and which, at the best, is but a poor foretaste of the joy in store for us.

What fools we must be!

Well, but sudden death? Oh, yes, I'll tell you what made me think of that. Nothing more nor less than a couple of prints which decorate the drab-coloured walls of this apartment. The first (I dare say you've seen it in many a shop window) is called "After the Battle"—a summer evening, with a calm, sunny sky, a bit of roadside beside a trampled corn field, a dead soldier lad lying across the footway, with a peasant girl holding his head on her knee, and looking down half wonderingly, half pityingly, on the white, upturned face.

That's all, and I dare say you know it by heart; but it brought the words "battle and murder, and sudden death" into my head; and as in a vision I seemed to see that soldier boy one short hour before. He is full of health, and strength, and youthful energy. His pulse is beating quick, his veins glowing with pleasure and excitement. Before, behind, around him on every side, tramp—stern and steady—a thousand gallant men; all wearing the same livery, all marching under the same flag, all bent on one and the same object—Death! death to another or themselves. Above, the sun shines calmly down on them from a fair, blue summer sky, without speck or spot to mar its dazzling purity. Below, from the corn-brake at their feet, a lark soars, singing jubilantly, from his soon-to-be-trampled nest. One of the men looks after the bird with a half-sigh, and turns to our lad, saying—

"Do you remember the lark's nest we found in the old farm meadow, Jack? when you were courting little Nellie. That was a pleasant day, wasn't it, old fellow?"

"Ay, that was a pleasant day," and pleasanter yet followed it; and yet, bright as they were, Jack has left them all for this. Perhaps never in his whole life has he felt

gladder, prouder—even better than now, when marching at the head of his regiment to the battle whose end is death. He even laughs, as he nods his head in assent; and then, in the very act—before he can even speak—a tiny puff of white smoke bursts out of a thicket hard by; there is a sharp “*thring*” in the air, and—the lad is gone! fallen flat on his face; shot through the heart; dead at—nay, under—the very feet of the friend he was addressing. Lift him up now, little peasant girl, if you will. You may come out safely; for they have all passed on. No one flagging, no one even looking behind for the gap in ranks soon to be so terribly thinned. “Poor Jack! he’s gone.” That is all—and what more would you have, after all? Yes, raise the young head, stroke back the sunny curls, wipe the dust gently from the white face, and there it lies before you, bright with the same careless smile it last wore in life—a smile graven for all eternity on the marble features.

That is sudden death!

I’ll turn round on my sofa now, please. Slowly, for I’m not very strong; but I want to show you the other picture—a darkened room, with a curtained bed, on which lies the wasted figure of a dead man—a clergyman standing by—a doctor putting up his watch—a weeping widow being led from the room by her daughters and friends. A very lugubrious subject; but I mean to go back an hour there, and enter the sick room. There on the soft, shadowed couch, lies a poor fevered, half-delirious wretch, struggling vainly with the bitter bodily pain which even clouds his mind with semi-insanity. He is apparently a Christian, a tolerably good, well-meaning man; but he knows there is not one day of his life which has gone down pure and unsullied to the Eternal record. He knows too that his time for better doing is over. He is dying. His friends cluster round the bed, weeping and bewailing. A minister of God prays, and warns and reminds him of the terrors of the fast approaching death, unless he “be perfect, even as his Father in heaven is perfect.” The doctor taxes every nerve, and adds doubly and trebly to his sufferings by striving to keep alive the poor flickering flame of existence. And yet, he cannot live. He cannot move, or think, or even pray. He knows death is dreadful, because he has dreaded it all his life: dreaded it so much that he has put the

very idea of it away from him; but he never thought it would come yet awhile. He has been ill so long, has suffered so much, is so weak and worn—how can he pray and repent now, when even to hear what the parson says is wearisome and painful? He struggles against the awful hand, already touching him. He moans. He even weeps. He is sinking from sheer vital exhaustion; and yet the good clergyman presses him. “Does he believe, does he repent?” “Yes, yes,” to both; but why, or what, he neither knows nor cares. A merciful torpor is numbing his poor, suffering, fearful soul. His head drops back, and—all is over! The pastor says, “A beautiful end. Our poor friend died in the act of professing his faith and contrition.” The relations creep weeping from the room, unnerved by the sight of that pitiful, lingering struggle; and yet—a few hours and even those deep lines of fear and suffering which had seemed graven on the dead face are gone. Death, so long in coming, has wiped all away with a kindly, careful finger; and the man who has died a lingering death of sickness and disease lies there calm and peaceful as that soldier lad in his bloody grave far away. Was his death any the happier? Do you think those hours of agony and weakness made him more fit to meet his Maker than the blow which at one sharp stroke severed the life-thread of that young man?

God forbid! Were we to think so in sober earnest, we should actually accuse the Author of Justice of an act more heartlessly unjust than the worst of men would show to a fellow-creature. Our Lord holds in his hands the Keys of Life or Death. His fingers turn either lock at the very moment He wills, and has willed from all eternity; and it would be absurd to suppose that, were a long lingering death necessary to man’s eternal salvation, He, in whose power alone it lies to give or withhold, would bestow it capriciously on this or that one, while scores and tens of scores are daily hurried out of the world at a moment’s notice.

Perhaps some of you have read Defoe’s “History of the Plague in London,” or Harrison Ainsworth’s painful and repulsive picture of the same period. I have never chanced to see the former, and the latter is of course only a romance; yet I fancy it must come very near the truth, for it has been my fate to be in a great city during a

like time of pestilence; and I remember well how the bravest men shrank and cowered under the terrible hand of death then raised visibly above them.

I can see it now, the long, fierce summer days, with the thermometer at 90° in the shade; and never a breath of coolness even at night—the white, bald sun glaring down day after day out of a blue, bright, blazing vault, without one fleck of white to break its dazzling, horrible beauty—the hot, white haze in the air; the hot, white houses, closed and shuttered, and empty; the hot, white streets, with blades of grass cropping up here and there through the dust; the liquid, glassy furnace of water, flowing like a fiery girdle round three sides of the doomed city. I see more—I see the constant stream of carriages, carts, and every vehicle that can be pressed into the service, carrying men, women, and children away out into the suburbs, the green, leafy Paso del Molino; or the rocky seaside Buçeo; and I see them taking the pestilence with them to those same rural refuges, and there dying by tens and twenties in a day, unnursed, undoctored, without even the comforts they might have had in their city home. Aye, dying in such numbers that the very orange groves and vineyards become poisoned; and “quintas” and rose-gardens are turned into graveyards to hold the hastily interred dead. I see the white, anxious faces of men and women, the terrible black cross marking nine out of every ten doors, the ceaseless funerals streaming outwards to the great plague pits opened below the speedily filled to overflowing Campo Santo.

I see all this, and leaning on my elbow, I hear the heavy roll of the hearse or ambulance, going from house to house; the constant dull tolling of the passing bell, the crackling of the great fires burning at every second or third crossing in the streets. . . . Oh, those fires! To my mind they were more melancholy than anything else; for in the midst of that fervid summer heat they flared and blazed and threw a red, lurid light into houses where husband, wife, and children lay dead or dying; while huge columns of black smoke rose into the sultry air, and hung like a funeral pall over the scorched and panting city. Why, even the little Spanish Gavroches, who would play at leaping through the smoking piles, shrieking and laughing like so many dusky imps—even they felt the influence of the time; for in

a country and a season where they usually almost live on fruit and vegetables, I have seen a huge bunch of purple, luscious grapes left on our window-sill, and lying there untouched until carried away by the “basureros” or dustmen next morning. Indeed, there was an edict against the sale of every fruit or green thing whatsoever; and people who could hardly bear the sight of meat constrained themselves to live on that and bread in the time when death would follow within a couple of hours after partaking of an apple or a slice of melon.

A couple of hours! Yes, that was the general duration of the sickness at the worst time; and often people sickening at their villas, a mile or two outside the town, died in the carriage which was conveying them to their city home. In those days many fled from their nearest relatives. Women forsook their posts as nurses, and left their fellow-women to be cared for by men, or God. Men themselves died—aye, dozens of them—from sheer fright, terror, nothing more; and that was what I wanted to remark to you. Fear, the fear of death, was actually in nearly half the cases the primary cause of disease—the actual harbinger of death itself! Most people, as I have said, fled out of town, and in many cases never returned. Of those who remained, scarcely one family out of five but had lost one member. Many and many perished all together. We, a family of ten, stayed all through, in the very heart of the city; and never one of us had a day's sickness from first to last.

The fact was we had no fear of death. We certainly obeyed one or two simple rules, to live plainly and to avoid unnecessary infection, but that was all; and we neither talked nor worried ourselves about what might be—the best rule of all; for Death, finding himself no object of dread, stayed away. And we went quietly through that terrible time, saddened indeed, but scarcely even unnerved by the horrible sights and panic-stricken faces around us.

Now I look back on those days with a sort of reverent awe; for I see that even such a time of trouble was sent in the mercy and wisdom of a God who saw that it was needed; that it was the fast-livers, the dissolute, and the pleasure-seekers, whose own souls had made death a terror to them, that were the first to be called away—the very ones for whom, from the

beginning of this special disorder, there was no hope. I saw a civil war which had raged for years quenched in the common danger. I saw cleanliness for dirt, order for disorder; a fresher, purer, brighter city rising from out of the desolation of the old.

"Oh! not in cruelty, not in wrath

The reaper came that day.

'Twas an angel visited this green earth,
And took the flowers away."

If we could only look on him as an "angel" always! But, alas! the bravest and coolest of us lack courage to welcome him when he comes, not for us, but our dear ones. We know it may be well for them; we may even know that they are ready and willing to go; but which of us can bear to loose their hand, and bid them "God speed" on their dark and lonely journey?

"He giveth His beloved sleep." Yes, even so; but, oh, the agony of watching the approach of that sleep in one near and dear to us; the double agony when it is spreading its dark shadow over a young and helpless child! You look surprised at that, and say, "But surely we can better afford to lose a baby than those older and longer with us?" Perhaps so; and yet to *me* the first grief is, if shorter, by far the sharper of the two; for we know that death may come as a punishment to a sinner, or a blessing to a saint. We may also feel that it would be cruel to grudge the old and weak, the worn and weary, from their eternal rest. There are even those in some families (God grant they be not many) whose lives are such that, to those who love them best, death seems the only hope, the only haven for them. But how can we say this of a little infant—a creature so small, so innocent, so helpless; called into the world only to be reclaimed; given a few brief hours of baby life, and snatched away just as it has nestled itself into our heart of hearts? . . . And the worst of it is, we can do so little for them. Our love is so impotent either to succour or to save.

For elder people we can read or pray. They tell us their needs, and we minister to them; their sufferings, and we sympathize; their last wishes, and we take a sad pleasure in carrying them out. But what of all this can we do for a little baby, one's very own child, whose tiny life seems bound up and centred in the love we lavish upon it?

Oh! ask any mother who has lost an infant what it is to sit by and see it suffer and

die, without her being able to know the extent of its pain, or even how to alleviate it; and with no guide, no help, but the little, feeble wail, growing fainter and fainter as the hours crawl slowly by; to see the baby fingers which used to creep so warmly round her neck now hanging stiff and nerveless in her clasp; the pouting, rosebud mouth, which has clung to hers many a time and oft, in many a shower of kisses, growing cold and pale as stone; the bright, round eyes, which used to laugh up into hers at first awakening, fixed and fading, without one responsive gleam to all her tenderness; the little cherub body so wasted that even *her* arms are too hard a resting place; the dimpled knees and crumpled rosy feet—feet which used to nestle in her palm, and which have been kissed and caressed, aye, every crease and dimple in them, many and many a time, stiffened, and rigid, and cold—so cold that not all her tender chafing, her passionate kisses, her burning, blinding tears can ever warm them to life again. Oh, baby, baby! if ever one felt tempted to rebel against the Father of all, or to distrust His love, it was when one saw you—so tiny, so innocent—suffering and dying, for what?—what end? or when, in the utter bitterness of one's spirit, one laid down the little marble body, thankful only that all *was* over—that there was nothing more to endure; and hard and resentful in spirit because an all-wise God has seen fit to inflict pain which we would have given our own lives to avert, to lend us a little life, and reclaim it before spot or stain has soiled its purity—before it has done aught but open our hearts, and draw forth the purest love of our natures.

Do not mistake me. Do not imagine that as time went on I did not grow to recognize the hidden love which I denied then; to see that it was "well with the child," to fold my hands in heartfelt thankfulness that it had been taken from the evil to come. Yes, I lie here now, and, looking beyond that little mound of grassy turf, can see the cherub face not pinched by suffering as when it last lay on my breast; but bright with glory unspeakable, shining down upon me from the blue above, a living witness of our Father's love—a link, perhaps the strongest, too often the only one, between me and Heaven. There are far worse ways of losing those dear to us than death; and only those who have experienced the secret shame, the unutterable sorrow of that bitter truth, will

know that it is no exaggeration when I say that there is many a loving, passionate heart which has cried out to God in anguish that its darling was not then lying dead at his feet, rather than living and yet lost, that would sooner see its idol cold and lifeless in the grave than know it is as it is—a god of brass and clay! And how many—how many a sinful, unhappy creature has been stayed in his or her downward path by the thought of some lost one whose memory alone is powerful to stay the act which might have shut them from each other for all eternity.

But I have a friend who does not believe in this reunion of hearts in another world; who quotes the old question of the Disciples to our blessed Lord about the woman with seven husbands, and has no hope of re-joining those she loves best in heaven. Now, what shall we say for such as she? What consolation has death for these? Verily, verily, I know of none; for of all grief theirs seems to me the sorest. And well, indeed, may the poet say that "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," if each memory of the loved one must bring with it the agonizing thought that we have lost him for all eternity; that our goodness, our tenderness, our close, clinging love for one another is only so much passion wasted and thrown away. It is not true. It is a lie to say it; worse than idiocy to believe it. *Somewhere*—in the Christian's heaven, the "happy hunting grounds," the "grand peut-être" of that unknown future of ours—we shall rise, and we shall meet again. Instinct tells it, nature proves it; and instinct and nature never lie. Does a seed *die* when we put it in the ground? Does a dragon-fly's grub raise a mighty bewailing before he goes to sleep in his chrysalis shell? I hope he is not such a fool. No; it is only *we*, we who see the exquisite brilliancy of the perfect insect, and inhale the perfume of the full-blown flower—we, who are reserved for the supreme folly of growling and grumbling all through the period of our grub existence, only to growl and grumble doubly when the hour for the supreme change draws nigh; to stand shivering and shaking outside the palace doors, because, forsooth, the tiny passage between us and them is dark, and the crossing it will take us—how long? One minute or one half-second?

Put religion aside altogether, and yet

answer me—are we not a brave and enlightened generation? or is there any folly like to our folly in this one thing?



TWO NIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HIS AT LAST."

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—I.

HAVING got a couple of days' leave at Christmas, I determined, notwithstanding the distance, to spend my short holiday in Yorkshire; and when I tell you that the nearest station to my uncle's house was twenty miles off, I am sure my readers will have already come to the conclusion

that there was a cousin in the case. And so there was—a tall, dark, handsome girl, who would be out the whole morning with her father, take a five-barred gate, ride through a bullfinch, or wait patiently for a find. I had many cousins besides Di Cholmondley, for they were a large family at Branston Hall; and at Christmas Sir John was fond of gathering as many relatives round his hospitable hearth as would face the dangers and perils of Yorkshire roads.

It was a bitterly cold afternoon when I left London, and the train was quite two hours late when I reached Milford Junction, from whence I was to ride to Branston. No true Yorkshireman would let his valuable horse stand waiting at a station on such a piercing night as this; but after a little delay, a fine strong animal, fresh from the stable, was brought up, my saddlebags were strapped on, and I mounted.

"Should only one go part o' the way, so as to gie ye a fair start, sir?" inquired the boy who had brought up my horse.

Interpreting this as equivalent to half a crown, I gave the *douceur*, and scouted the proffered aid. Had not I ridden a dozen times between this and Branston?—certainly not at Christmas, with four feet of snow on the ground, to say nothing of drifts; but still I felt confident of my organ of locality; so set off at once, with the beacon of my cousin's bright face beckoning me on.

In those days travelling on horseback was the quickest and surest mode of locomotion; there was no stoppage by drifts, felled trees, impassable ruts, or the hundred and one evils to which a carriage was subject on the so-called roads of the West Riding of Yorkshire. When I ran down for my yearly visit, I always hired a horse at South Milford, kept him during my stay at Branston, and rode him back on my return to town; that is to say, my uncle undertook that a horse should be in readiness for me, as nothing on earth would induce him to let any of his own run the risk of standing at a station. In fact, he considered trains a personal affront to the horse species, and would in no wise countenance their waiting on the vile innovator.

For the first three miles my way lay on the Great North road leading from London to York; but soon after passing Harrup Bar—well known in the days of coaching, and now to all true lovers of the hunt—I turned off into a bye-path, which, though it led

through wild and rugged country, cut short the distance by five miles at least.

The road wound up and round a hill, then out on to a long, bleak, dreary moor, covered with a counterpane of snow, and pillowed with drifts, deep, wide, and treacherous; across which white plain I had to make my way. While on the North road it had been plain sailing enough; there were drifts there, too, but they had been cut through. Here all was changed: there was no trace of any living thing having been over the smooth, white surface, save the pattering of innumerable rabbit feet.

As I came forth from the shelter of the lane, I fixed the point across the moor to which I must steer by the curl of smoke that rose from a hidden chimney. I began to cross at a respectable jog-trot, thinking it best not to waste the strength of my nag, but was soon compelled to fall back on a still more sober pace; and even this was every now and then put a stop to, as we walked gracefully, though involuntarily, into a drift, the next moment to emerge spluttering and bedizened with snow. Thus floundering and struggling, we battled over a third of the distance, and I still kept my eye steadily fixed on the smoke of the cottage. As we went on the snow got deeper and deeper, and my horse less willing to encounter fresh drifts. We had started the best of friends; on climbing the hill our terms became less affectionate; when charging through the snow I was obliged to have recourse to a little moral persuasion; and now it seemed as if we were to fall out entirely.

We had just reappeared from a drift deeper than usual, and I had anxiously looked for my curl of smoke as I gathered myself and horse up after this most severe struggle, when the beast stuck his fore feet in the snow, and utterly refused to move further. I tried talking, coaxing, and every conceivable thing I could think of, to incite him to action; but with no result. This was too tantalizing, within such a short distance of my blue wreath of smoke; for there was the cottage, standing out distinct on the horizon, much nearer than I had dared to hope.

We must have ploughed through a much wider and longer tract of snow than I had at first imagined in our final grand encounter; then, too, my uncle's house was only five miles beyond, and *she* lived there.

I looked up at the sky: the moon shone fitfully through a bank of black clouds, and as yet not a star was to be seen. Who knew how soon I might be left in utter darkness, should the whim take her to veil her face? This was more than I could stand. Raising my whip, I struck the animal sharply over the flank, at the same time pressing my spurs viciously into his sides, and the next moment we were galloping madly over all obstacles towards the thin streak of blue smoke.

As I neared the cottage, an uncomfortable feeling came over me that it was strange. There was an unfamiliarity about the place which determined me to stop and knock at the door.

I was answered by a woman's voice. Here was something new! Nothing surprises you more than to be answered by a woman when you expect to be greeted—and in this case not in the politest of tones—by the gruff voice of a man.

"Can I speak to any one?" I called out.

"Oh! ye can speak, but I doubt ony body being the better for it, with t' wind howling round t' house as it is," said a young woman, opening the door.

Seeing me she started, begged pardon, hoped I would come in and make myself at home, as it was not fit for "the likes o' me" to be out in such weather. As I had no idea of not reading my fate in my cousin's bright eyes that night, I thanked her, refused, and inquired—

"If I was right for Branston Hall?"

"Branston Hall! I was nigh upon twenty mile out of t' way."

"Where the deuce am I, then?" exclaimed I.

"On the road to South Milford."

It is very hard to be vexed with yourself, especially when your own stupidity has prevented your accomplishing your wished-for desires. I could not put it on my horse, for he had shown his sense by refusing to stir a step in the wrong direction. Of course, I saw it all now. How I had been plunging down instead of cutting through the drift, and then galloping off in the wrong direction. But the cottage? Well, that only proved there were more smoky chimneys than one in the world. What an idiot I had been! I felt extremely miserable, sitting out there in the cold. It was impossible to go on in the dark, through unknown country, to Bran-

ston; equally so to return to South Milford. The only thing to be done was to accept the woman's hospitality.

Following her into a yard, I stabled my horse for the night. These Yorkshire people always seem to have yards, or at any rate a stable, they can stow away a horse in, which suggests unpleasantly to the benighted traveller that at one time cattle-lifting and its accompanying evils were not uncommon in this part of her Majesty's dominions. Then I returned with my saddle-bags into the house, and was duly hailed by a lusty yelling from an old-fashioned white painted cradle, on low rockers, placed on the floor.

"Haud ye' noise," cried my Thais, as she seized hold of the cradle, and began rocking it violently. "Grandfather is no good any longer with childer, since he had his last stroke o' rheumatics. He used to be a rare 'un at nursing bairns; but he can't rock or do nought but wag his tongue now. Can ye, granny?" screamed his daughter-in-law, with a shrillness of tone that effectually woke the old man out of his sleep; who, on seeing me, commenced pulling an imaginary forelock, and asseverating that "he was not deaf, only a little hard of hearing."

After such an introduction, I thought it incumbent on me to cultivate the aged one's acquaintance; so, drawing my chair to his side, I began a conversation which turned out highly entertaining to him, but totally unintelligible to me, as he had a habit of answering his own questions according to his own lights when not catching the purport of my answers. Luckily, a diversion was soon created in my favour by a prolonged howl from the antique cradle, and my hostess, stopping in her occupation of laying the cloth, came up to me and made the following speech—

"Sir, I beg pardon for taking the liberty, but I reckon you are well'y nigh clammed; and I am in this pernickelment—I can't both get t' supper and rock t' child; so if you want summat to eat, you must rock t' craddle till I am ready to gie him a turn."

Having made out the drift of her argument, I set to vigorously rocking the cradle, and if that child turns out sane I am not answerable for it. I found the harder I rocked the quieter it got, so I went on with a vengeance, swinging it backwards and forwards in a marvellous manner. As I stooped over the cradle, taking care to keep the hood between me and the he, she, or it

inside, I noticed three or four smooth round holes pierced completely through the wood, looking exactly as if at one time it had served as a butt for pistol practice. So puzzled was I as to how they could have come there, that at last I drew the attention of my hostess to the phenomenon.

"Aye," said she, "those are Boggart holes."

"Boggart holes! Boggart holes!" exclaimed I, à la George III.; "what do you mean by Boggart holes?"

"Law bless the gentleman! and hast ye never heard tell ou t' Boggarts?"

"No."

"Nor t' Guytrash?"

"No, nor any other trash."

"Ye shouldna say that, sir. For it is a sore thing to be hard o' belief," said she, in a subdued voice, mysteriously.

Said I, beginning to perceive I had unwittingly fallen into a nest of superstition—

"I am willing to believe anything I am told on good authority."

"Well, my uncle on my mother's side met t' Guytrash himself."

"And what did he say?"

"He didn't say nothing, but he looked awful. I have heerd uncle tell how he felt as if he was standing in a bucket of hard ice as Boggart laid hold on him from behind. He was that scared he fell down on his knees, and he prayed Boggart once, and he wouldn't let him go; and he prayed him twice, and he wouldn't let him go; and he prayed him thrice, and he did let him go; and uncle was an altered man from that day. He never went agin to t' public afore coming home with his wages as long as he lived."

"But I want to know what this Boggart trash, or whatever you call him, was like?"

"Uncle used to say as those who had seen t' Padfute didn't ought to talk of his looks, and those who hadn't didn't fall to know; but if you want to hear more," added she, seeing my disappointed face, "granny there has seen t' Guytrash himself. Tell t' strange gentleman how you saw t' Padfute at Harrup Bar," screamed she into his ear.

"Aye, aye," answered he, shaking his head, while his eyes lit up with strange gleams of past memories.

I was now all on the qui vive for a true Yorkshire ghost story; so I worked away harder than ever at the cradle, to keep the

anathematized infant quite quiet, in order not to lose one word of the forthcoming tale.

"T' GUYTRASH O' T' HARRUP BAR.

"There are some as believe in Boggarts and some as don't. I make no remark as to what I believe, I only say what I saw; and if it was on my dying deathbed, I would say the same, as how I seed t' Padfute with my own two eyes at Harrup Bar, forty years ago next Christmas. Let 'em gainsay it who may.

"It wor a cold December night, and I was sitting quite quiet like a side o' t' fire, with a little bit of baccy, when in comes my old woman, in siccan a like on a flurry as I knowed summat must have happened.

"Well, old woman, and what's t' job now?" says I.

"Job as I reckon you'll be none so keen to go after. Here's t' babby come, and no cradle to put it in!"

"By jengy! that's a go," says I, as t' baccy pipe dropped on t' floor, all along o' me being took in such a hurry like.

"Are you going to get on your hat, instead of gawping there by t' side o' fire like any other fool on a man, when your own flesh and blood may be dying upstairs all along of you keeping me a-jawking downstairs?"

"Aye, well, lass, I'll be off in a minute, and you'll see t' doctor afore you think."

"Doctor, indeed! Do you think, at such a time, I'll be plagued with any o' siccan-like rubbish i' t' house? Haven't I been ower twenty year in t' trade, and never had a death brought home to me yet, which I mean to have printed on my grave, under a lady weeping on an urn, with a cherub infant astride o' t' top."

"Dinna tak' on so. I ne'er meant to hurt your feelings; but who am I to fetch?"

"Why, t' cradle of course, man. Just you trot over to mother's, at Upton, and ask her to lend us t' white cradle, or, if it's out, m'appen some o' t' neighbours would let us have one for a bit."

"So out I went. It was siccan a dark night, a man could not see his noyse if he wanted, and I had better nor five mile to walk.

"Well, I got to mother's, at Upton, reet enough, and there I stayed for a bit o' stuff. Then one or two neighbours dropped in to hear how granddaughter was going on, and some said it warn't neighbourly to go till I

had looked in and taken a drop o' summat with them; and they were all so friendly-like, and glad to see me, that it were nigh on twelve afore I war fairly out o' t' village and striding home.

"I hadn't been agate o' walking many minutes afore t' rain came down; so I clapped t' cradle on my head, and it warn't a bad umbrelly neither. T' way lay along t' road t' night mail from London to York ran, and it war that dark I began to feel very lonesome, and wish I had some one with me; so I said to myself, 'My lad, you must not get soft-like, as if you had had too much to drink, for they say t' Boggarts never harm those who are sober.' So, conversing with myself for company's sake, I strode on.

"I had gotten nigh Harrup Bar, when I heerd a kind o' noise that made my blood freeze up; t' cradle began to shake so, I thought it would have fallen over and me on t' top of it; but I managed to crawl into t' ditch with cradle still on t' top of my head. T' noise came on nearer and nearer, like the rumbling of an army of chariots, and I could hear the roaring of his voice. Then I knew it was t' Guytrash coming.

"I can never quite remember how t' next part came; but I saw he'd eight great flaming yellow eyes, and two great big red ones, as large as t' bell i' t' church tower. Then he spoke to me in a voice like siccan a many trumpets. I thought t' judgment day was come, and 'cause I would not answer, he yarked out t' thunderbolt, let fly at my head, knocked off t' cradle, and disappeared in a flash of lightning. I thought I was dead at first, and then set off running, and niver stopped till I got safe home, when I told my wife how I had seen t' Guytrash or t' devil, I didn't know which.

"Next morning t' men i' t' village walked with me to Harrup Bar; and there, just as I said, we found t' cradle i' t' ditch, with four holes in it which t' Boggart had made; and when anybody comes a-twitting me of Boggarts, I point to t' cradle, and says, 'If you can say who made them holes, I'll say no more of Boggarts;' and I've never found a man yet whom that question did not cap."

The space in the cottage being limited, I wrapped my rug round my legs, drew my hat over my eyes, and contented myself with spending the night before a glorious coal fire.

ANGUSH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

TEAR THE FOURTH.

IN FELICITY.

THE next day was wet and miserable; and waiting about, and feeling strange and uncomfortable, as I did, made matters ever so much worse. We were all in the school-room; and first one and then another stiff-backed, new-smelling book was pushed before me, and the odour of them made me feel quite wretched, it was so different to what of late I had been accustomed. For don't, pray, think I dislike the smell of a new book—oh, no, not at all, I delight in it; but then it must be from Mudie's, or Smith's, or the St. James's-square place, while as for these new books—one was that nasty, stupid old Miss Mangnall's "Questions," and another was Fenwick de Porquet's this, and another Fenwick de Porquet's that, and, soon after, Noehden's German Grammar, thrust before me with a grin by the Fraulein; while at last, as if to drive me quite mad, as a very culmination of my miseries, I was set, with Clara Fitzacre and five more girls, to write an essay on "The tendencies towards folly of the present age."

"What shall I say about it, ma'am?" I said to Miss Furness, who gave me the paper.

"Say?" she exclaimed, as if quite astonished at such a question. "Why, give your own opinions upon the subject."

"Oh, shouldn't I like to write an essay, and give my own opinions upon you," I said to myself; while there I sat with the sheets of paper before me, biting and indenting the penholder, without the slightest idea how to begin. I did think once of dividing the subject into three parts or heads, like Mr. St. Purre did his sermons; but there, nearly everybody I have heard in public does that, so it must be right. So I was almost determined to begin with a firstly, and then go on to a secondly, and then a thirdly; and when I felt quite determined, I wrote down the title, and under it "firstly." Then I allowed the whole of the first page for that head, put "secondly" at the beginning of the second page, and "thirdly" upon the next, which I meant to be the longest. Then I turned back, and wondered what I had better say next, and whether either of the girls would do it for me if I offered her a shilling.

"What shall I say next?" I asked myself, and then corrected my question; for it ought to have been, "What shall I say first?" And then I exclaimed, under my breath, "A nasty, stupid, spiteful old thing, to set me this to do, on purpose to annoy me!" when, as I looked on one side, I found the girl next me was nearly at the bottom of her sheet of paper. And then I looked on the other side, where sat Miss Patty Smith, glaring horribly down at her blank paper, nibbling the end of her pen, and smelling dreadfully of peppermint; while her forehead was all wrinkled up, as if the big atlas were upon her head, and squeezing down the skin.

Just then I caught Clara's eye—for she was busy making a great deal of fuss with her blotting paper, as if she had quite ended her task—when, upon seeing my miserable, hopeless look, she came round and sat down by me.

"Never mind the essay," said Clara; "say you had the headache. I dare say it will be the truth, won't it? For it always used to give me the headache when I first came."

"Oh, yes," I said, with truth, "my head aches horribly."

"Of course it does, dear," said Clara; "so leave that rubbish. It will be dancing in about five minutes."

"I say," drawled Miss Smith to Clara, "what's tendencies towards folly? I'm sure I don't know."

"Patty Smith's," said Clara, in a sharp voice; while the great stupid thing sat there, glaring at her with her big, round eyes, as much as to say, "What do you mean?"

Sure enough, five minutes had not elapsed before we were summoned to our places in the room devoted to dancing and calisthenic exercises; and, as a matter of course, I was all in a flutter to see the French dancing master, who would be, I felt sure, a noble-looking refugee—a count in disguise—and I felt quite ready to let him make a favourable impression; for one cannot help sympathizing with political exiles, since one has had a Louis Napoleon here in difficulties. But there, I declare it was too bad; and I looked across at Clara, who had slipped on first, and was holding her handkerchief to her mouth to keep from laughing as she watched my astonished looks; for you never did see such a droll little man, and I felt

ready to cry with vexation at the whole place.

There he stood—Monsieur de Kittville—the thinnest, funniest little man I ever saw off the stage. He seemed to have been made on purpose to take up as little room as possible in the world, and he looked that tight and squeezey, one could not feel cross long in his presence; while, if I had not been in such terribly low spirits, I'm sure I must have laughed aloud at the funny, capering little fellow, as he skipped about, now here and now there—going through all the figures, and stopping every now and then to scrape through the tune upon his little fiddle. But there, it would have been a shame to laugh, for he was so good and patient; and I know he could feel how some of the girls made fun of him, though he bore it all so amiably and never said a word.

I know he must have thought me terribly stupid, for there was not one girl so awkward, and grumpy, and clumsy over the lesson. But then, although it was done kindly enough, what did I want with being pushed here, and poked there, and shouted at and called after in bad English, when I had been used to float round and round brilliantly lighted rooms, in the *deux temps* or polka, till day-break? And I declare the very thoughts of such scenes at a time like this were quite maddening. Finished! I felt as if I should be regularly finished long before the year had expired; and, after the short season of gaiety I had enjoyed in London, I would far rather have gone back to Guisnes and spent my days with dear old *Sœur Charité* in the convent. But there, after all, I fancy papa was right when he said it was only a quiet advertising dodge—he will say such vulgar things, that he picks up in the City—and that it was not a genuine convent at all; I mean one of those places we used to read about, where they built the sisters up in walls, and all that sort of thing. But these things do grow so dreadfully matter-of-fact, and so I found it; for here was I feeling, not so dreadfully young, but so horribly old, to be back at school.

The place seemed so stupid: the lessons seemed stupid; girls, teachers, everything seemed stupid. There were regular times for this, and regular times for that, and one could not do a single thing as one liked. If I went upstairs to do my hair, and sat down before the glass, there would be a horrible,

cracked voice crying, "Miss Bozerne, young ladies are not allowed in the dormitories out of hours;" and then I had to go down. Oh, it was dreadful, having one's time turned into a yard measure, and doled out to one in quarter inches for this and half inches for that, and not have a single scrap to do just what one liked with. Perhaps I could have borne it the better if I had not been doing just as I liked at home. For mamma very seldom interfered; and I'm sure I was as good as could be always, till they nearly drove me out of my mind with this horrible school.

For it was a school, and nothing else but a school; and as they all ill-used me, and trod upon me like a worm in the path, why, of course I turned and annoyed them all I could at the Cedars, and persisted in calling it school. Finishing establishment—pah! Young ladies, indeed—fah! Why, didn't I get to know about Miss Hicks being the grocer's daughter, and being paid for in sugar? And wasn't Patty Smith the butcher's girl? Why, she really smelt of meat, and her hair always looked like that of those horrible butcher boys in London, who never wear caps, but make their heads so shiny and matty with fat. Patty was just like them; and I declare the nasty thing might have eaten pomatum, she used such a quantity. Why, she used to leave the marks of her head right through her nightcap on to the pillow; and I once had the nasty thing put on my bed by mistake, when if it didn't smell like the crust of Mrs. Blunt's apple dumplings, and set me against them more than ever.

Dear, sensitive reader, did you ever eat finishing establishment "poundings aux pommes," as Mrs. Blunt used to call them?—that is to say, school apple dumplings, or as we used to call them, "pasty wasters." If you never did, never do; for they are horrible. Ours used to be nasty, wet, slimy, splashy things, that used to slip about in the great blue dish. And one did slide right off one day on to the cloth, when the servant was putting it on the table; and then the horrible thing collapsed in a most disgusting way, and had to be scraped up with a spoon. Ugh! such a mess! I declare I felt as if I was one of a herd of little pigs, about to be fed; and I told Clara so, when she burst out laughing, and Miss Furness ordered her to leave the table. If they would only have boiled the dreadful dump-

lings in basins, it would not have mattered so much; but I could see plainly enough that they were only tied up loosely in cloths, so that the water came in to make them wet and pappy; while they were always made in a hurry, and the crust would be in one place half an inch and in another three inches thick; and I always had the thick mass upon my plate. Then, too, they used to be made of nasty, viciously acid apples, with horrible cores that never used to be half cut out, and would get upon your palate and then would not come off again. Oh, dear! would I not rather have been a hermit on bread and water and sweet herbs than have lived upon Mrs. Blunt's greasy mutton—always half done—and pasty wasters!

The living was quite enough to upset you, without anything else, and it used to make me quite angry, for one always knew what was for dinner, and it was always the same every week. It would have been very good if it had been nicely cooked, no doubt, but then it was not; and I believe by having things nasty there used to be quite a saving in the expenditure. "Unlimited," Mrs. Blunt told mamma the supplies were for the young ladies; but only let one of the juniors do what poor little Oliver Twist did—ask for more—and just see what a look the resident teacher at the head of the table would give her. It was a great chance if she would ask again. But there, I must tell you about our living. Coffee for breakfast that always tasted like Patty Smith's Spanish liquorice wine that she used to keep in a bottle in her pocket—a nasty toad! Thick bread and butter—all crumbly and dab, as if the servant would not take the trouble to spread the butter properly. For tea there was what papa used to tease mamma by calling "a mild infusion," though there was no comparison between our tea and Allsham tea, for mamma always bought hers at Twinings', and Allsham tea was from Miss Hicks's father's; and when we turned up our noses at it, and found fault, she said it was her pa's strong family congou, only there was so little put in the pot; while if they used not to sweeten the horrible pinky-looking stuff with a treacle-brown sugar; and as for the milk—we do hear of cows kicking over the milking pail, and I'm sure if the bluey-looking stuff poured into our tea had been shown to any decent cow, and she had been told that it was milk, she would have kicked it over in an instant.

TWO NIGHTS IN THE COUNTRY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HIS AT LAST."

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—II.

AS I neared Branston Hall, early next morning, I became conscious of that unwashed feeling which always comes over a man after sitting up in his clothes all night. I had started before it was light, in order to arrive in time to retire to my room before being discovered by any of my cousins; but the way proved longer than I anticipated, and, in spite of all my endeavours, it was nine a.m. before I drew rein at the lodge gates. Sneaking up by the side of the drive, I intended going round to the stables, and so gaining entrance with the strictest secrecy. I had ridden to within a hundred yards of the house. I saw the library window, and could catch a gleam of the roaring fire inside, as the rays danced on the old-fashioned mullions. They were all at breakfast. Now was the perilous moment; once past that window and I was safe. Not a sound was to be heard as we gently walked over the fast-melting snow, when suddenly the silence was broken by the sharp yapping of a little cur of a dog. In my vexation, I raised my long riding-whip and administered so sound a cut to the offending animal that, with a suppressed howl of pain, he vanished into the bushes.

The game was up; the library window was ablaze with merry eyes, and the library roof echoed to the sound of joyous laughter. To see a lot of fresh, happy faces (for had they not had their breakfast?) peering from a warm, comfortable room, laughing at you—worn, hungry, tired, and unwashed—outside, is a trial to any man's feelings; more so when you are especially anxious of appearing to advantage in the eyes of one you love. Making the best of the situation, I rode boldly up to the window, and exclaimed, in not the most amiable of tones—

"It's all very well for you all to stand in a jolly warm room laughing, but it's no joke to a hungry man outside, particularly when he has had a near thing of sleeping out in the snow all night."

I was now the hero of the day. There was not a woman's heart in that assembly

which did not bleed for me; not that I cared for their kind thoughts. I had only looked for one face, and a glance told me of two dark circles round those dear eyes. I was not displeased at that—it showed I had been missed, perhaps watched for. I forgot that I had had no breakfast.

The chaff from the men and the sympathy of the women, which greeted my appearance in the library, I pass over; suffice it to say, I did not forget that I had had no breakfast when once fairly launched among the breakers of that meal.

When I entered the drawing-room after dinner that evening, I found all my cousins seated in a ring round the large fire; and as each of us came into the room, we naturally dropped into a seat by the side of our favourite. Thus it was not many minutes before I found myself seated on a low stool by the side of the fireplace, a large screen behind, and only Di between me and the wall.

Here was an opportunity for me to walk over the course, the buzz of conversation being loud and continuous. If we had been alone, I should have put my arm round her, and that would have rendered matters considerably easier; but being in public, I had entirely to put my trust in the eloquence of my eyes and pathos of my voice. In these cases, everything depends on the way you start; and while I was thinking of something remarkable to say, Di, impatient of the delay, broke in, and gave me an opening.

"Poor dear little Tiny has never come back. I have hunted all through the house, and my maid has been into all the servants' rooms, and not a trace can we find of him anywhere."

"He is sure to turn up before night," said I, thinking of the bad shilling.

"But is it not extraordinary that he should be the first to welcome you, and then run off, and be seen no more? I think he is quite like Argus, who turned his head, saw his master, and died of happiness."

"Then I am glad his mistress has not followed his example," said I, blunderingly, thinking that all hope would vanish if my share in the disappearance of the pet were known.

"The little brute is safe to be hiding somewhere," thought I. "A dog that is not worth twopence has never the luck to get lost."

"I did not know he was so fond of you till this morning," continued Di.

"I had hardly dared to hope I was so remembered," said I, looking straight into her eyes.

"I shall be so lonely without him," murmured she.

"I know one who would willingly take his place—one who would be quite as faithful, trustful, and ten thousand times more loving. Might I—dare I hope that you would receive him instead—not as a pet for a time, but for life?"

"I would have both."

I was silenced. It was all very well for me to make use of the dog to get to my point, but quite another thing for her to class me with the little cur.

"Then you will not go shares?"

"You should not have let me come here if you only meant to laugh at my love. You knew how I liked you, and of course must have guessed what I was coming down for. There is nothing on earth I would not do for you, Di, though you would not lift a finger for me."

"That is not true. I forgive you striking my dog—there!—and will have you for life, even if I never see Tiny again."

"If I lose my appointment by staying, I will not leave Branstion until I have found him," whispered I, full of contrition.

Her answer was drowned in the peals of laughter that burst forth from the rest of the group round the fire.

"Now, George," said Sir John, "it is your turn. You must tell us the next."

"The next what?" exclaimed I, at a total loss as to his meaning.

"Bless the boy!" laughed my uncle, "where have his ears been all this time that he has not heard what has been going on?"

And the next moment I was directed by at least two dozen voices to give them a ghost story instantar. Everybody had been doing it, and it was now my turn.

Storytelling was not my forte; so, in sheer desperation, I had recourse to mine host's of the previous night; and, much mangled, and, I am afraid to say, shorn of its true beauties, I gave them the story of the Guytrash of Harrup Bar.

Then Di was called on, and, with great mystery, recounted how the Branstion Ghost was a tall, pale lady, dressed in white, who was accustomed to perambulate the corridors at night, gathering up her skirts with a

faint rustle as she passed the door of any room occupied by a member of the family; and when all the passages had been thus traversed, she halted at the top of the stairs, shook out her dress with a prolonged rustle, deliberately took from under her left arm a head; which, stooping down, she placed gently on the edge of the first step, and then, releasing her hold, let it slowly roll downstairs, nickety-nock, like a stone in Carisbrook well. As the head reached the bottom step, it turned its ghastly eyes up at the rigid figure above, and both vanished at the same moment.

Had she seen it? No, for the house was restored before her time; and the ghost, not being a reformer, disappeared with the alterations. But papa knew all about it.

Here Sir John was overpowered by a storm of inquiries, to all of which he seemed unwilling to reply, and put off the most pertinent queries with good-natured jokes. His hesitation, however, showed me there was more truth in the story than at present he chose to acknowledge; which determined me, when my cousins had retired, to question my uncle somewhat more closely concerning this ghost, the palpable solution to the Harrup one having emboldened me not to put much faith in the spiritual fraternity.

"Of course, some legend or got-up story is at the bottom of this ghost," said I, drawing my chair close up to the fire when the room was quiet.

"There is a story, and a true one too, I believe, which I have no objection to telling you, though I wished to ignore its existence before your young cousins. It is all very enjoyable hearing about other families' ghosts; but when it comes to your own, it is too near home to be pleasant. I noticed, when Di finished, several young eyes turned furtively in the direction of the dark corners of the room; so thought it best to change the current of ideas, well knowing what it was as a child to suffer from a belief in ghosts."

"Then you have heard, seen, or known about this one?"

"George," said my uncle, looking straight at the fire, "there is something about this ghost I have never been able to explain; so I think it best first to tell you the origin of the phenomenon, then my own experience, and let you draw your own conclusions."

"Agreed," said I.

THE LEGEND OF THE BRANSTON GHOST.

"It seems the first knight, Sir Hubert, when quite young, was married by his parents to his cousin, the heiress of Branstou. Soon after the marriage he left for Germany, to fight under the banners of Gustavus Adolphus, and fall in love with a lovely Hungarian. In the meantime, the old Lord of Branstou sickened and died, leaving his daughter sole heiress to all his lands. She sent off at once to tell her husband in Germany, and implore him to come back and take possession of his estates; but Sir Hubert was so enamoured with his Continental life, that, instead of returning, he sent a messenger to say he was dead. His wife, having been too young when they married to have any but the faintest recollection of him, soon found consolation in a less warlike husband. Unfortunately for her, their happiness was of short duration, as he died before their son was born, leaving his young widow broken-hearted to mourn his loss.

"After many years, Sir Hubert, tired of his foreign life, returned to England, breathing out vengeance on the head of the supposed successor to his estates; for he had heard of his wife's second marriage, but not of the death of her husband and birth of her son. Great was his surprise to find her dressed in widow's weeds; but thinking it was a device got up to allay his suspicions, he accused her of it, and demanded, in brutal terms, the production of his rival. It was in vain she assured him he was no more—that only brought forth such fearful maledictions, that, fearful of her son's life, she determined to hide him from the power of this remorseless man; so conveyed him secretly to a little chamber in the well-tower, where she visited him nightly, but always at different hours, for fear of being detected; and brought him food on which he subsisted, together with water drawn from the well.

"Sir Hubert, being still convinced that his rival was in hiding, feigned a deep sleep one night, and watched his wife get up, look furtively round the room, take some provisions from under a skin, and steal softly out. Seizing his sword, he followed. She glided swiftly along the corridor, paused, and listened at the head of the staircase, and then went rapidly on, gathering up her skirts as she passed the doors of his kinsfolk, through fear of disturbing their slum-

bers. Thus, unperceived by her, he dogged her steps to the well-tower, and saw her disappear behind a door.

"Creeping gently up, he stood for a second listening to the subdued tones within—a man's voice and a woman's.

"He had found his rival at last. Grasping his sword, he opened the door, to see his wife sitting on a low stone pallet, caressing the fair head of a youth by her side.

"Rushing into the room, he flung her on the ground, and with one blow severed the youth's head from his body; then, taking it up on the point of his sword, he carried it to the edge of the well, where, resting it on the first step, he drew out his sword, and let it roll down.

"As the head reached the last step, before plunging into the water, it paused for an instant, while the blue eyes looked up with a heavenly expression at the distracted figure of the mother above.

"It is said Sir Hubert was so horrified when the eyes opened, that he stood for some time transfixed to the spot; and when at length he turned, his wife was gone, never to be seen in bodily form again, though from that night her spirit haunted the house.

"The shock, however, made Sir Hubert an altered man. He had the body interred in the family vault, and you can still see in the records a note of so many marks to pay for masses to be sung for the repose of the soul of the youth.

"So much for the legend. Now for my own experience.

"I remember perfectly well, when a child, lying awake night after night bathed in cold dew, and with every pulse throbbing with fright, waiting to hear the dull thud of the head as it rolled down the stairs."

"But did you hear it?"

"Most certainly. I make allowances for childish fancies and conjured-up noises; but still, when stripped of all illusions, I am convinced that I did hear, not once but constantly during my visits to my grandfather, a sound as of a hard substance rolling slowly down from step to step."

"Then how came it that you never saw it?"

"In the first place, I was too young to encounter the risk of meeting it; secondly—and this is what makes it distinct from other ghosts—it never came at the same time."

"How do you account for that?"

"I can give no explanation, and can only refer you to the story I have just narrated, and ask you to notice that it particularly remarks, 'She never stole forth to see her son at the same hour of the night, and always gathered up her skirts as she passed the rooms of his kinsfolk, for fear of awaking them.' Now, before the bumping of the head, I always heard a faint rustle outside my room as of a lady drawing away her dress, for fear of its brushing against the door."

"Did any one ever see it?"

"Members of the family? Yes. But no stranger ever—that is, as far as my own knowledge goes. But I have heard my father say he once asked his grandfather, old Sir Guy, the son of the first Sir Hubert (who married again in his old age), whether he knew the ghost? Which question brought down such a storm of indignation on my father's head that he never ventured to repeat his question; and, to all my inquiries, always gave but one reply—that he would never help to keep alive the disgrace of his ancestors."

"How did you get rid of it at last?"

"My father shut up the house, and went to live at the Manor; and there I remained after him until I found my family getting uncomfortably large for the house, so that turned my attention to the old Hall. I sent for an architect, and together we planned out the improvements. All the floors in the passages leading to the private apartments were to be taken up, and new planks laid; then, with many regrets, I decreed that the old well-tower should come down, my great object being to do away with the ghost, and so make the house habitable for children and servants.

"When all the alterations were finally settled upon, I determined to remove to the Hall, and stay there myself while the dismantling went on, in order to be on the spot should any solution to the mystery turn up.

"Unluckily, the very day I was to go I met with a severe accident in the hunting field, which laid me up for so long a time, that when at last I was able to take up my quarters at Branstons, the alterations were far advanced. So anxious was I to know if my improvements had been of the slightest use in allaying the inquiet spirit of the ghost, that I settled to pass the first night

in the room we are now sitting in; as, with the door propped open, I could command the whole view of the staircase.

"I shall never forget how slow the time seemed to pass. I ran over the whole course of my own life, and that of each of my ancestors, looked at my watch, and discovered it was past twelve. Any time now I might hear the familiar sounds. Placing my chair directly opposite the open door, and setting down by my side a lantern, I had got ready for emergencies.

"I sat down to listen and watch. Once I thought I caught the slightest rustle; but I waited in vain for the dull thud of the head against the stairs. All at once I became aware of a draught of wind. It did not pass me, but seemed to be floating about the house. It gave the impression of some one gliding through the passages at great speed, with garments wafting about. As strangely as it commenced, it suddenly ceased; and then I was startled by so curious a sound that, seizing my lantern, I rushed upstairs, and at once directed my steps to the strangers' corridor, as from thence proceeded the weird sounds of cracking, bumping, and tumbling about that had so astonished me when below.

"As I raised my lantern above my head to get a straight look down the corridor, what was my surprise to find all the spare furniture I had seen so neatly piled up and covered with carpets by the workmen in the afternoon, strewn about the floor.

"When I made inquiries the next morning, I found that, while the men were removing the rubbish from the bottom of the well the day before, they came across the skull of a young man, which, through some superstitious dread, they buried at once without telling me."

"And your solution is," said I, "the lady, not finding the head in its accustomed unburied place, rushed about the house looking for it, and so created the current of air. In despair at not finding it, she searched in the piles of furniture, and so strewed them on the floor. Eventually, finding that the head had been buried, she gave up her visitations, seeing that the object of her nightly visits had been attained."

"I do not hesitate to acknowledge that that is very much my interpretation; and I know for a fact she has never been heard or seen from that day to this."

After bidding Sir John good night, I carefully bolted my door, and walked to the fire.

"Wish he had not said this," thought I, looking around the large, old-fashioned, wainscoted room, full of dark corners. There was the great four-poster, hung with red curtains, closely drawn—this in itself was a ghostly object; there were heavy oak chests with drawers; but what again most attracted my notice was the curious old carved crimson velveted arm-chair, standing on the right of the fireplace. This had already nearly got me into trouble; for I had been so struck with its rare carving—which, together with the delay caused by the loss of a stud, had made me so late for dinner—that I had only time to kidnap Di on the threshold of the dining-room, and lead her triumphantly to her seat; so, resisting its attractions this time, I determined to make up for my uncomfortable quarters of yesterday by enjoying a good night's rest.

Somehow, I kept putting off the unholy hour when the candle would be extinguished, and I should be left to the tender mercies of my uncle's ancestors. I wrote a note to my mother, thought of my cousins, found myself repeating the same thing over and over again, while the air seemed gradually thickening. I knew perfectly well there was nothing behind the door but a long, low oak chest; yet I could have sworn to an old man sitting on it, bent down, with hands clasped tight on his knees as if in sudden pain. Then the arm-chair creaked!

I turned—my pulse beat—I felt my hair give an extra curl. Why not? Byron says Hassan's beard curled with ire. Why not my hair with—expectation? I certainly thought I saw a difference about the chair—nothing distinct, but a haziness, a blue film, from out of which flashed a clear, bright yellow light, like the eye of a Cyclopan animal. Why I thought so I cannot say. I never saw a one-eyed animal.

Rousing myself, I proceeded cautiously to the chair, never once taking my eye off the shining light. As I advanced, the blue film faded away. On reaching the chair, I bent over the bright object, touched it, took it up, and discovered my lost stud, which, in my examination before dinner, must have dropped out on to the chair, and lain there ever since.

This gave me renewed zeal. I felt myself, myself. Do not ask my sisters what

that is, for they have no sympathy with any one but a long-legged parson, with a voice like a watchman's; but if you want to know, ask a certain handsome cousin of mine. She will tell you I am tall, clever, courageous, with light wavy hair, eloquent hazel eyes, and a mouth when it smiles which lits! "But on their own merits modest men are dumb!"

To return to this eventful night.

Even when divested of man's inventions, the strange, chilly feeling still clung to me. I considered it was caused by the long journey from town, charging through drifts of snow, a restless uncomfortable night, early ride when hungry, together with the novelty of seeing so many faces—for I lived rather the life of a recluse in London; and then, at the top of all this, in order to steady my shaken nerves, the conversation I had had with my uncle late that night.

The finding of the stud, however, completely scattered all further illusions. I put out the candle, and walked deliberately backwards to the bed, having been taught in the days of my youth always to watch out the last spark, for fear of it setting the house on fire. First I got entangled in a fearful complication of curtains; but, extricating myself neatly from them, I plunged boldly into bed, down my feet went to the bottom—no, not to the bottom, for before they had got very far down they came in contact with a wet, cold, clammy substance, and the next moment I felt seized by the right foot, as there issued from the bed the sound of intermittent thunder.

I had been expecting this. I knew there was always something disagreeable in every house, and generally more so in old ones than new. Here was a situation for a poor, defenceless man, in a strange room, fire nearly out, one foot disabled, and a total ignorance as to the locality of the matches!

I jumped up, seized the poker, stirred the fire, and returned to the bed. With one hand I flung back the clothes, with the other prepared for mortal combat with the foe.

The foe!—there, curled up, and quietly drying his dripping coat between my sheets, lay Di's little pet dog!

Ah, what a little treasure he seemed now, for had not I vowed to restore him to her?

Putting down the poker, I began to address him in insinuating terms. I begged him to come down, I implored him to move, I besought him to look at the fire; to all

of which he vouchsafed nothing but a suppressed growl and an unholy glimmer from the corner of his visible eye.

Finding him deaf to all persuasion, I began stirring him gently with the smutty end of the poker; but this assault on my part brought forth such a succession of snarls and snaps at the poker's end, that, fearful of waking Di, I was obliged to desist. No, I had had my innings in the morning, and he meant now to have his revenge, and a cruel one too, by keeping me, for the second night in succession, out of bed.

Question. Should I take him by the scruff of the neck, and fling him to the other end of the room, thereby running the risk of getting my fingers snapped, and losing the good opinion of my cousin for ever; or, like a dignified Indian, wrap my blanket around me, and let intellect triumph over brutality?

The latter was best—I could not give up Di; so, composing myself in the ghostly arm-chair, I fell fast asleep.

"I am glad Tiny paid you out for your ill-temper to him yesterday; for now I have not his battles to fight, I can answer your questions with an unbiassed mind," said Di, as we stood behind the screen in the drawing-room, saying good-bye.

"Then I may come down in the summer, and take you back?"

"Yes."

"And you will not mind the dirt and smoke of London?"

"No. I shall be too happy to see it; for if you are so kind to my little wretch of a dog, how—"

"Much more loving shall I be to you?" put in I, as I bade her adieu.

And that is how I spent my two nights in the country.

TEN O'CLOCK AT THE MONUMENT.

AND there we met, a party of five, all told, on, without exception, the finest day we had last autumn.

Bang! The report of a cannon, close to where we are now located, makes us jump. It is our parting salute at London Bridge pier, from which we are just starting on board the *Alexandra* on her last trip for

the season to "Gravesend, Southend, Sheerness, and round the Great Eastern. Single fare 2s., return 3s."

Before the collector comes round, we decide (from information we have received) not to take return tickets, as we have determined to go on board the Big Ship, and have a good look over her.

We see which way the wind blows, and settle nicely abaft the funnel, out of the smoke, preferring our own smoke to any other. We believe in doctors who take their own physic, and we order a draught from one who declares that he could live on it.

"Ease her, stop her, turn her astern!" all shouted in one breath, make us jump up, and, looking anxiously ahead, we find ourselves very nearly on board of a much smaller craft than our own, which has had the temerity or stupidity to attempt to cross our bows. Our skipper puts it down to the latter, and gives the occupants of the wherry a bit of his mind, which, judging from the said bit, is filled with feelings anything but respectful to the aforesaid passengers and crew of the above-mentioned obstacle. However, we have had to cave in, and the animals—quadrupeds we call them—getting the bit between their teeth, do as they please with us.

But we get used to this kind of thing; for the tide having now turned, barges, laden and unladen, float lazily about all over the road, sticking so closely to one another, that we wonder how on earth (or water) we shall get through. Axiom: The best of friends must part. So must barges; for the little *Martin*, giving us the go-by, is flitting, now this way, now that way, then ahead, gradually picking her way among the sluggards, now and then coaxingly elbowing them aside, and occasionally getting hold of one by the nose, and swinging it round as if it were on a pivot. The animated unit in charge thereof thanks our pioneer by exhausting his vocabulary of superlative expletives thereat, as he drops astern. We pour in a broadside of chaff, and leave the aforesaid unit to the sympathies of those, his fellow-craftsmen, who have many a time and oft been served likewise. So we creep along, and presently see a tolerably clear road ahead.

This corpulent old dame here is rather a nuisance, though. There are plenty of spare seats elsewhere; yet she insists, both argumentatively and actually, in pushing our

three bottles of "Guinness" and five tumblers—by and by, they are six—close together on the seat, which we are using partly as a table, and depositing her stuffy self on the other end. Never mind, we are out for a pleasure trip, and don't mean to quarrel; so Tom stands up for a look about him, leaving more room for me and the glasses.

Greenwich! Yes, there it is, and we wonder (forgive our simple ignorance, ye who have done the Grand Tour, Cook cicrone) whether Venice is much more beautiful than our dear old cockney Greenwich, on such a lovely day as this.

Bang! Bother—we jump up again, and—well, it really is bother, for the corpulent old dame aforesaid, not having jumped up when we did, is now seated on the deck, the bottles emptying their remainders into her lap, and the tumblers keeping them affectionate company. The tumblers are now six, though not all of a size. Poor old soul! we can't help joining in the hearty laugh at her expense, her vehement and uncomplimentary epithets notwithstanding. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and the aforesaid stuffiness of our corpulent friend has saved our pockets to the extent of the reputed value of five glasses and three (reputed) pint bottles.

The good creature is not a teetotaler (nasal evidence unimpeachable); yet, from what we could gather from her soliloquy, she would rather not have had so much gratuitous refreshment. We must not—indeed, could not—be ungallant, though; so we assist her to find her feet, and, declining our most courteous invitation to crack a bottle with us, she glides majestically to fresh fields and pastures new.

We begin to feel hungry. We read the bill of fare—"Dinner in the saloon at one o'clock: cold, 2s. 6d.; hot, 3s.; with poultry, 3s. 6d." So, as we don't kill a pig every day, we carry the poultry ticket nem. con.

We feel at least a shilling's worth of satisfaction at having got so far—that is (like the "Beloved eye, beloved star"), so near—the comfort of a good dinner; yet, on second thoughts, it being not yet twelve o'clock, we are unpleasantly far off too.

We take a stroll; look into the cook's cabin, and have a chat at the door with him who is now a very great friend in need, relating, in our own most vivid style, freely illustrated, how the three bottles

and five tumblers tumbled on to a larger tumbler, &c., &c.—for which tale we feel amply rewarded by getting a sniff of nice somethings hereafter; though, at the same time, we begin to suffer from an attack of oil-stone on the appetite. We continue to stroll, and we look at the engines, airing our knowledge thereof by pointing out to each other the slide valves, plumber blocks, eccentrics, &c., &c., and cap the whole with a very shrewd hint that the bearings look a little heated. The up-turned face of the engineer stamps out all our conceit, as we read that contemptuous curl on his lip, so we away.

Having awayed, we reach the upper deck again. That bang was our salute at Woolwich pier. We were just in time to see our starter fed (we should say loaded; but then we are hungry, and that is a sharp thorn, you know)—well, fed with a little loose powder from the palm of a hand, a wad rammed home with a short poker, a little more powder out of the aforesaid palm on touch-hole, fusee struck and applied to last-named; then the little brass cannon says bang, as if in anger at the indignity of the entire proceedings.

It appears that we are going to salute every pier down the river to-day, as it is our closing day, although the band are telling brazen falsehoods by playing "It is our opening day." We forgive them, for they can and do play Bishop's glees decently, and we live some of our youthful days over again while listening to the well-known tune, "Auld Lang Syne," at parting from every pier—wonderfully ambiguous, though, owing to the vocal performances of sundry ancient-looking fellow passengers, who evidently "always join in in 'Auld Lang Syne', and always stand up in the polka." We wonder audibly how it is that all those pocket handkerchiefs which have been strung up from stem to stern ever since we started are not yet dry enough to come down, and we hide our diminished heads when informed by one of the aforesaid ancients that they are flags, and intended to make us look cheerful. We feel rather so just now, as there may be a chance of luck, it not being washing day, although it is our closing day. Ancient informer evidently does not approve of our mirth, and observes that we are "going ahead a bit."

We quite agree with him, for we are now within sight of Gravesend, and we rub

our hands in anticipation of soon trying the edge of, and taking the edge off, our appetites. There's old Windmill Hill; and we expatiate on the excellence and economy of the ninepenny teas, "including shrimps or watercresses," that we have many a time had at Silvester's, away there at Springhead. Old Peggy, too, whom we teased by poking our walking sticks through the side of the tent, greatly to the annoyance of the fair ones hearing about their future husbands, children, and other fortunes. Peggy coming out, and, with good-tempered, serio-comical reproof, wheedling us out of "just a copper for poor Peggy."

Happy thought! We shall dine after leaving Gravesend; and we long to say adieu.

"Threepence a pint, sir—fresh 'biled.'"

First we would and then we wouldn't, for fear it might spoil our dinner; but, after all, we do buy a pint of "real Gravesend prawns"—they will do for tea, anyhow.

Our artilleryman has hard work now to come up to time with the little brass popgun, for we have to honour each of the three piers with a puff as we pass. Having puffed and passed, we descend to the saloon; but find, instead of dinner ready, that it will be a full half-hour yet, and, worse still, we have made a mistake (never again!) in not having secured our seats at table. Not a soul there, but plates reversed in all the best places, which, of course you know, are nearest the chairman. However, we make the best of a bad bargain, and cause five more plates to be inverted. We don't like to look hungry, if we can help it, so we go on deck again, and from tasting we eventually fall to eating the prawns. They are most delicious—quite a banquet.

The river is lively with shipping, some at anchor, some yielding to the persuasion of the tiny tug—looking down condescendingly thereon, as a handsome woman sometimes does upon her future diminutive "for better and for worse," frequently more of the latter than the former.

What splendid sailing those barges make, and how picturesque they look, with their green sides, amber masts, and Vandyke brown canvas.

Now we smell a smell, although we are not near Barking Creek. We follow our noses and find ourselves at table, almost ashamed to be first there; but then some one must be first, you know. We hear the

dinner bell on deck, and are soon joined by other hungry mortals.

We begin—begin dinner? No; we are the wrong end of the table for attention. We begin hailing a waiter. He must be deaf. We hail more waiters; they are all deaf as posts. We go on hailing, till at last we do manage to get the "drumstick" of a roast duck, foot attached (the engraving in our cookery book must be wrong), with about so much meat on it, or rather so little, that we say it is properly so called. This is the "poultry." We ask for more, and are informed that the said "poultry is off." Judging from the size of our portion, it needed not much muscular exertion when it took to itself wings and made off. Will we take anything else? We say, in despair, roast pork; and we get roast something, between a bung and a bath-brick. Then, after waiting so long that there is little fear of scalding our mouths with the gravy, we get the scrapings of the vegetable dishes from the upper part of the table—

Let us draw a veil over the only unsatisfactory part of our day's trip.

Having swallowed our dinner, we go on deck, and there endeavour to do the same with our disappointment. We cannot, however, refrain from reckoning the probable per centage of profit to the caterers out of our "five at three and six, sir, seventeen and six."

After a little time we look out ahead, and catch the first glimpse of the Big Ship, or rather of the tops of her six masts, lying yonder, behind the banks of the Medway.

"Shall we call at Sheerness pier first?"

"No, sir—sail round first, sir."

"How long shall you stop at Sheerness?"

"Only a few minutes, sir. Return almost directly."

Now we are passing the pier, and the Big Ship, in the distance, disappoints us by appearing so much smaller than we expected; but we get nearer and nearer still, till now we are abreast, and obtain a tolerably good idea of her size by comparison with the insignificance of our own craft. We round her and return to the pier.

"No time for return tickets to land; going back directly."

As we have not return tickets (thanks to the information we had received), we bid defiant adieu to the captain and crew, and go ashore. We have decided upon return-

ing by the last train, eight o'clock from here.

No means of getting on board the *Leviathan* unless we charter a special boat—at a, no doubt, special price.

A colour sergeant, whose acquaintance we make for the time, says, "They'll ask you a mint of money."

We call a council of war, and almost give up the idea, till stifled disappointment breaks out from one of the party thus—"I came down to go over the ship, and what is more, I mean to go"—"And so do I," said another and another, till at last we all agreed again, and determined to go somehow. Eventually we came to terms with a jolly (old) waterman, who, on condition that we assist in working ship, proposes to take us there, wait our pleasure, and bring us back for, "We'll say four bob a head, sir."

"No, say ten shillings for the job, and we go; otherwise, we go also, but not with you."

We have it at our price, and we away. Our sail assists us, our boatman instructs us concerning all things, both naval and military, fully explaining the cause of the prevalent desertion mania, &c., &c. We admire those old hulks, housed in, and looking, minus the snow, as if they had sat for the pictures of "Winter in the Arctic Regions." After a most agreeable little trip we get nearer and nearer, resting occasionally on our oars ("with feather'd spray") to reverence the grand proportions of this monster of the deep. At length we reach the barge, moored alongside, which serves as a landing stage. We climb up thereon; and, for the first time perhaps, this great *Leviathan* looks great indeed. We look upward, and from end to end of this mighty mass of ironwork, calmly sleeping on the surface of the deep, breathing so quietly that we are hushed in mute astonishment; for, as we place our hand upon her side, we feel a slow pulsation caused by the pressure of the wind, and so she gently sways from side to side, till the wind drops, and she too falls asleep.

By kind permission of the officer in charge we ascend the ladder, and after a journey up as many steps as one would find in a good-sized house, we stand upon the deck. And now a feeling of awe at sight of this stupendous building floating on the water, creeps over us, and we think what mere pigmies are we men.

We have seen the Ship at sea, and

although she appeared to be a "big thing," yet that was all. For the mere distant view, or even careful reading of statistics of her vast proportions, conveys no adequate idea of the greatness and grandness of her immensity.

We now proceed to more minute inspection.

The view from end to end of the deck exhibits everything in distant, more distant, and most distant perspective. Separate steam engine for working the paying-out machinery, the recovering gear, the cable windlasses, other windlasses, and last, not least, the steering apparatus. Each of these steam engines of such proportions as would do credit to any large manufactory. The gigantic machinery for laying the telegraph cable; the freeing apparatus, necessary both for the comfort of man in hot climates, and that which is perhaps of more importance, the actual existence of the telegraph cable itself—each tank in which it is carried being furnished with a constant supply of ice to keep the outer covering from softening; the immense anchor cable, a link of which it would be a heavy task to lift by hand; the huge anchors, weighing ten tons a-piece; the miles of ordinary rope of most extraordinary thickness; the steering gear, itself so stupendous, having four wheels on the top deck, at which sixteen men can, and do sometimes, work at once; other auxiliary wheels below, to aid in working the tiller chains if required. As we have said before, there is an independent steam engine for this purpose, which is used when in the open sea; but on nearing port, hand labour is employed.

What shall we say of the main engines themselves; the immense paddle shaft, two enormous cylinders working on each of the two throws of the crank; the steam-pipe, large enough for a water company's grand main; one thousand-horse power, nominal, for the paddle engines; sixteen hundred-horse power, nominal (and that is but a mere fraction of the available horse power), for the screw engines? These latter are on a different principle entirely from the paddle engines, and totally independent. The telegraph dials for conveying instructions from the commanding officer to the engineer and others on board. Long galleries in the very heart of the engines, by which to reach in safety every part of this Titanic machinery, even though it were in motion. Oiling boxes

innumerable, holding quarts a-piece. The immense boilers, side by side, like so many retorts in a gas-house. Looking out at a door on deck, we see the mighty paddle-wheels, resembling in size nothing that we have ever seen before—as it were, a large hippodrome seen through a magnifying glass, each float having the superficial area of the wall of a good-sized room. Dark passages from end to end of the ship, like railway tunnels. The ship, did we say? Why, here we have two ships, one inside the other, with space enough to walk comfortably between them; so that, should the outer one be injured, the inner one would still remain staunch. Then the saloon, like a magnificent dining-room or ball-room, containing furniture enough for a good-sized mansion, chandeliers, looking glasses, mirrors, couches, pianofortes, and every other of the luxuries and conveniences of upholstery. As our guide proceeds, we feel relieved to come again on to the upper deck; for, for an hour and a half, we have been below in one incessant whirl of machinery. We look into a huge vat—one of a few used for storing the cable. We don't look long, for we get giddy at the depth. We mount upon the bridge between the paddle boxes, and here we say, What a terrible amount of responsibility for one human being to have to command this immense vessel, which takes five hundred men to work and attend! What a mind the man must have had who designed such a structure, not merely as an experiment, but confident—absolutely certain—as to its feasibility. Here it is, to justify him and do him honour. We would not heap upon him any panegyrical superlatives; but, in plain, honest truth, we almost reverence his name and genius. From the time we first stepped on board we have been awed into respectful silence by some mighty power. We get some idea, from such a sight as this, of our own littleness.

Bidding good-bye to the few uneaten sheep and porkers housed on deck, which have "done the voyage out and home," and also to our guide, we again join our friend the waterman, below; and, after a most enjoyable sail, we reach Sheerness pier. Here, after recruiting exhausted nature, we take the last train for London, and part company, remarking that there is many a worse way of spending a day than by meeting, for such a trip as this, at ten o'clock at the Monument.

ANGUISH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

TEAR THE FIFTH.

RECOGNITION.

AS to dinners at the Cedars, on Sundays we had beef—cold beef—boiled one week, roast the next. On Mondays we had a preparation of brown slime with lumps of the beef in it, and a spiky vandyke of toast round the dish, which was called hash, with an afterpiece of mosh posh pudding—Clara christened it so—and that was plain boiled rice, with a white paste to pour over it out of a butter boat, while the rice itself always tasted of soapsuds. Tuesday was roast shoulder of mutton day. Wednesday, stewed steaks—such dreadful stuff!—which appeared in two phases, one hard and leathery, the other rag and tatter. Thursday, cold roast beef always—when they might just as well have let us have it hot—and pasty waters, made of those horrible apples, which seemed to last all the year round, except midsummer vacation time, when the stock would be exhausted; but by the time the holidays were over, the new ones came in off the trees—the new crops—and, of course, more sour, and vicious, and bitter than ever. We used to call them vinegar pippins; and I declare if that Patty Smith would not beg them of the cook, and lie in bed and crunch them, while my teeth would be quite set on edge with only listening to her.

Heigho! I declare if it isn't almost as hard work to get through this description of the eatables and drinkables at the Cedars as it was in reality. Let me see, where was I? Oh, at Thursday! Then on Fridays it was shoulder of mutton again, with the gravy full of sixpences; and, as for fat—oh! they used to be so horribly fat, that I'm sure the poor sheep must have lived in a state of bilious headache all their lives, until the butcher mercifully killed them; while—only fancy, at a finishing establishment!—if that odious Patty Smith did not give Clara and me the horrors one night by giving us an account of how her father's man—I must do her the credit of saying that she had no stuck-up pride in her, and never spoke of her "esteemed parent" as anything but father; for only fancy a "papa," with a greasy red face, cutting steaks, or chopping at a

great wooden block, and crying "What-d'yer-buy—buy—buy?" Let's see—oh! of how her father's man killed the sheep; and I declare it was quite dreadful; and I said spitefully to Clara afterwards that I should write by the next post and tell mamma how nicely my finishing education was progressing, for I knew already how they killed sheep. Well, there is only one more day's fare to describe—Saturday's, and that is soon done, for it was precisely the same as we had on the Wednesday, only the former used mostly to be the tatterry days and the latter the hard.

Now, of course, I am aware that I am writing this in a very desultory manner; but, after Mrs. Blunt's rules and regulations, what can you expect? I am writing to ease my mind, and therefore I must write just as I think; and as this is entirely my own, I intend so to do, and those may find fault who like. I did mean to go through the different adventures and impressions of every day; but I have given that idea up, because the days have managed to run one into the other, and got themselves confused into a light and shady sad-coloured web, like Miss Furness's shot silk dress that she wore on Sundays—a dreadful antique thing, like rhubarb shot with magnesia; and the nasty old thing always seemed to buy her things to give herself the aspect of having been washed out, though with her dreadfully sharp features and cheesey-looking hair—which she called auburn—I believe it would have been impossible to make her look nice.

Whenever there was a lecture, or a missionary meeting, or any public affair that Mrs. Blunt thought suitable, we used all to be marched off, two and two; while the teachers used to sit behind us and Mrs. Blunt before, when she would always begin conversing in a loud voice, that every one could hear in the room, before the business of the evening began—talking upon some French or German author, a translation of whose works she had read, quite aloud, for every one to hear—and hers was one of those voices that will penetrate—when people would, of course, take notice, and attention be drawn to the school. Of course there were some who could see through the artificial old thing; but for the most part they were ready to believe in her, and think her clever.

Then the Misses Pellperret's young ladies

* Quoted from Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount's model vacation letters.

would be there too, if it was a lecture, ranged on the other side of the Town Hall. Theirs was the dissenting school—one which Mrs. Blunt would not condescend to mention; while it used to be such fun when the lecture was over, and we had waited for the principal part of the people to leave, so that the schools could go out in a compact body. Mrs. Blunt used to want us to go first, and the Misses Pellperret used to want their young ladies to go first, while neither would give way; so we used to get mixed up all together, greatly to Mrs. Blunt's disgust and our delight in both schools; for really, you know, I think it comes natural for young ladies to like to see their teachers put out of temper.

But always after one of these entertainments, as Mrs. Blunt called them—when, as a rule, the only entertainment was the fun afterwards—there used to be a lecture in Mrs. B.'s study for some one who was charged with unladylike behaviour in turning her head to look on the other side, or at the young gentlemen of the grammar school—fancy, you know, thin boys in jackets, and with big feet and hands, and a bit of fluff under their noses—big boys with squeaky, gruff, half-broken voices, who were caned and looked sheepish; and, I declare, at last there used to be so many of these lectures for looking about, that it used to make the young ladies do it, putting things into their heads that they would never have thought of before. Not that I mean to say that was the case with me, for I must confess to having been dreadfully wicked out of real spite and annoyance.

I don't know what I should have done if it had not fallen to my lot to meet with such a girl as Clara Fitzacre, who displayed such a friendly feeling towards me, making me her confidante to such an extent that I soon found out that she was most desperately—there, I cannot say what, but that a sympathy existed between her and the Italian master, Signor Fazzoletto.

"Such a divinely handsome man, dear," said Clara one night, as we lay talking in bed, with the moon streaming her rays like a silver cascade through the window; while Patty Smith played an accompaniment upon her dreadful pug-nose. And then, of course, I wanted to hear more; but I fancy Clara thought Patty was only pretending to be asleep, for she said no more that night, but the next day during lessons she asked me

to walk with her in the garden directly they were over, and of course I did, when she began again—

"Such a divinely handsome man, dear! Dark complexion and aquiline features. He is a count by rights, only he has exiled himself from Italy on account of internal troubles."

I did not believe it a bit, for I thought it more likely that he was some poor foreigner whom Mrs. Blunt had managed to engage cheaply; so when Clara spoke of internal troubles, I said, spitefully—

"Ah, that's what mamma talks about when she has the spasms and wants papa to get her the brandy. Was the signor a smuggler, and had the troubles anything to do with brandy?"

"Oh, no, dear," said Clara, innocently, "it was something about politics; but you should hear him sing 'Il balen' and 'Ah, che la morte.' It quite brings the tears into your eyes. But I am getting on with my Italian so famously."

"So it seems," I said, maliciously; "but does he know that you call him your Italian?"

"Now, don't be such a wicked old quiz," said Clara. "You know what I mean—my Italian lessons. We have nearly gone through 'I Miei Prigioni,' and it does seem so romantic. You might almost fancy he was Silvio Pellico himself. I do hope you will like him."

"No, you don't," I said, mockingly.

"I'm sure I do," said Clara; "I said like, didn't I?"

I was about to reply with some sharp saying, but just then I began thinking about Mr. St. Purre and his sad, patient face, and that seemed to stop me.

"But I know whom you will like," said Clara. "Just stop till some one comes—you'll see."

"And who may that be, you little goose?" I said, contemptuously.

"Monsieur Achille de Cochonet, young ladies," squeaked Miss Furness. "I hope the exercises are ready."

Clara looked at me with her handsome eyes twinkling, and then we hurried in, or rather Clara hurried me in; and we went into the class-room, when, directly after, the French master was introduced by Miss Sloman, who frowned at me, and motioned to me to keep standing. For I had risen when he entered, and then resumed my

seat; for I believe Miss Sloman took a dislike to me from the first, because I laughed upon the day when she overset the little table while performing her act of deportment.

But I thought no more of Miss Sloman just then, for I knew that Clara's eyes were upon me, and I could feel the hot blood flushing up in my cheeks and tingling in my forehead; while I knew, too—nay, I could feel, that another pair of eyes were upon me, eyes that I had seen in the railway carriage, at the station, in my dreams; and I quite shivered as Miss Sloman led me up to the front of a chair where some one was sitting, and I heard her cracked-bell voice say—

"The new pupil, Monsieur Achille, Miss Bozernec."

I could have bit my lips with anger for being so startled and taken aback before the dark foreign gentleman of whom I have before spoken.

Oh, me! sinner that I am, I cannot tell much about that dreadful afternoon. I have only some recollection of stumbling through a page of *Télémaque* in a most abominable manner, so badly that I could have cried—I, too, who would not condescend to make use of Mr. Moy Thomas as a translator, but read and revelled in "*Les Misérables*," and doated on that Don Juan of a Gilliat in "*Les Travailleurs de Mer*," though I never could quite understand how he could sit still and be drowned, for the water always seems to pop you up so when you're bathing; but, then, perhaps it is different when one is going to drown oneself. Blundering through a page of poor old *Télémaque*, after having almost worshipped that dear old Dumas, and fallen in love with Bussy, and Chicot, and Athos, and Porthos, and Aramis, and D'Artagnan, and I don't know how many more—but stop; let me see. No, I did not like Porthos of the big baldric, for he was a great booby; but as for Chicot—there, I must consider. I can't help it; I wandered then—I wandered all the time I was at Mrs. Blunt's, wandered from duty and everything. But was I not prisoned like a poor dove, and was it not likely that I should beat my breast against the bars in my efforts to escape? But there, I am safe at home once more, writing and revelling in tears—patient, penitent, and at peace; while, as I recall that afternoon, it seems one wild vision of burning eyes, till

I was walking in the garden with Clara and that stupid Patty Smith.

"Don't be afraid to talk," whispered Clara, who saw how distraite I was; "she's only a child, though she is so big."

I did not reply, but I recalled her own silence on the previous night.

"You won't tell tales, will you, Patty?" said Clara.

"No," said Patty, sleepily; "I never do, do I? But I shall, though," with a grin lighting up her fat face—"I shall, though, if you don't do the exercise for me that horrid Frenchman has left. I can't do it, and I sha'n't, and I won't, so now then."

And then the great, stupid thing made a grimace like a rude child.

It was enough to make one slap her, to hear such language; for I'm sure Monsieur de Cochonet was so quiet and gentlemanly, and—and—well, he was not handsome, but with such eyes. I can't find a word to describe them, for picturesque won't do. And then, too, he spoke such excellent English. I suppose I must have looked quite angrily at Patty, for just then Clara pinched my arm.

"I thought so," said she, laughing; "you won't make me jealous, dear, about the signor, now, will you, you dear, handsome girl? I declare I was quite frightened about you at first."

"Don't talk such nonsense," I said, though I could not help feeling flattered. "Whatever can you mean?"

"Oh, nothing at all," said Clara, laughing. "You can't know what I mean. But come and sit down here, the seat is dry now. Are not flowers sweet after the rain?"

So we went and sat down under the hawthorn; and then Clara, who had been at the Cedars two years, began to talk about Monsieur Achille, who was also a refugee, and who was obliged to stay over here on account of Louis Napoleon; and a great deal more she told me, but I could not pay much attention, for my thoughts would keep carrying me away, so that I was constantly going over the French lesson again and again, and thinking of how stupid I must have looked, and all on in that way, when it did not matter the least bit in the world; and so I kept telling myself.

"There!" exclaimed Clara, all at once; "I never did know so tiresome a girl. Isn't she, Patty, tiresome beyond all reason?"

But Patty was picking and eating the

sour gooseberries—a nasty pig!—and took not the slightest notice of the question.

"It is tiresome," said Clara again; "for I've been talking to you for the last half-hour, about what I am sure you would have liked to know, and I don't believe that you heard hardly a word; for you kept on saying 'um!' and 'ah,' and 'yes;' and now there's the tea bell ringing. But I am glad that you have come, for I did want a companion so badly. Patty is so big and so stupid; and all the other girls seem to pair off when they sleep in the same rooms. And, besides, when we are both thinking—that is, both—both—you know. There, don't look like that! How stupid of you to pretend to be so innocent, when you know all the while what I mean!"

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THE CASUAL OBSERVER.

AMONGST THE SPIRITS.

YOUR Observer has been silent concerning his investigations, but not inactive. He has been, so to speak, busy with the still, even though he is still with the busy. The still he alludes to is, so to speak, the illicit still of the spirits; and he is now full of spirits—in a state of literary inebriation—inasmuch as he has been dealing largely with proof spirits, and spirits that are above proof.

Here is what he has done. Aiming slowly and with care at hitting the light, he has plunged into darkness; for seeing that it might be as well to examine what had been done before going further, he determined to be present at two séances—the one of avowed spiritualism, the other of the disavowed—of the expositors of what they denominated a sham.

He went, then, one evening to a house which shall be nameless—the private house of a gentleman of well-known name, and joined the company awaiting the arrival of a medium—a gentleman imbued with great powers, and who had been engaged for a series of séances; and who at length came.

The ladies of the party gave a shiver that was composed of equal parts of anticipation, excitement, and fright. They indulged in a second shiver when, after a good deal of mat friction, umbrella-stand rattling, and the knocking down of two or three hats from the pegs, the gentleman in black entered the room, bowing solemnly to all in turn, keeping his small eyes half-closed the while; but, at the same time, apparently carefully investigating everything and everybody with the greatest of zeal.

He was a lank, serious individual, whose liver apparently did not do its duty properly, and left him with a certain amount of inutilised bile diffused yellowly in his system, and coming a great deal more to the surface than was proper in an individual

not suffering from jaundice. His hair was, an American would say, "too much," spoiling greatly the collar of his coat, and setting the Observer's fingers itching for five minutes' good use of a pair of scissors, without hindrance or let. His whiskers were not; his moustache was closely shaven; and his chin was adorned—this word is used, of course, subject to opinion—with a small portion of straight black hair of a separate nature—that is to say, it was thinly sown: forty-seven, or at the most forty-nine, hairs would have been the total of his beard.

This was the medium. I will say no more about his looks, lest the temptation prove too strong, and the whole of this article be taken up with remarks upon his umbonate face, his boots, the cut of his garb, and his hands.

I cannot help it. I must say a few words about those hands. Bell, is it not, who has written about the character in the hand? Bell should have seen these long, broad, bony hands, that always looked moist where the joints swelled out so largely, which were painfully impressive in the appearance of the long nails and their surroundings, while the way in which his broad thumbs bent back whispered of an activity that might be peculiarly applied. There was certainly character in his hands. From them you could judge the whole man: he held his character in his hands, and from it you would have said that he was a being with a most wholesome distaste of soap.

In a strange, unctuous voice, wherein was an absence, sometimes marked, of the language used in polished society, he laid down the laws for our proceedings, telling us that, for the time being, he would be entirely in the hands of the spirits who might come, though he could not answer for it; that the door must be fastened, and every ray of light from candle, gas, fire, or the parting day, religiously excluded. And, above all things, he warned us, with a solemnity befitting the occasion, that if any person struck a light when the spirits were in the room, it might cause the death of the medium.

This announcement completely took the wind out of the sails of anybody who might have felt disposed to satisfy his longing eyes, and the proceedings went on. An accordion, a handbell, a couple of paper trumpets formed by rolling up two songs, and a toy tambourine were laid ready on the table; we all took our seats round it, and every

ray of light was excluded save that given by one burner in the gaselier; and the master of the house stood up, ready at the order of the medium to turn that off.

As to the table, that was an ordinary mahogany dining table, round which we sat, hands joined to hands; the visitors on either side of the medium holding his hands fast. Then the order was given, the gas was turned off, the master sat hastily down, and the séance proper began.

You will acknowledge, perhaps, that to sit in total darkness is rather peculiar. The air seems filled with strange objects dancing before the retina, and a disposition to flinch pervades the being. The darkness here was intense; and each person, on the impulse of showing that he or she did not mind it at all, began directly to talk in a rather forced way, the consequence being that several remarks made were of the class that may be termed inane.

Now rose the voice of the medium, telling us that the spirits rather approved of singing, and suggesting that we should try some song or hymn; the consequence being that the Canadian boat song was offered up a cruel sacrifice upon that mahogany table, to such an extent as regards time, tune, and words, that its own father would never have recognised his son.

Then we had a little more darkness, unbroken save by a desire on the part of one or two individuals to wipe their noses; after which there was more irrelevant conversation; and lastly, an announcement from some one that the spirits were at hand, for a sensation as of a cold wind could be felt blowing over the hands; and then—yes, undoubtedly there was a feeling as of a draught from an open door; and directly after, it might have been at the same moment, a numbing, tingling, pins and needles sensation running up the arms, for all the world as if one was being mildly galvanised.

There was another pause, followed by the rustling of the paper tubes about the table; and, as far as one could judge, they rolled and moved about, rose up, fell down, and then, apparently gathering strength, floated or were carried up and patted the heads of first one and then another of the seated party, provoking faint ejaculations of alarm from the ladies and mocking remarks from the stronger sex, such as "Take care there!" "Hallo!" "Mind what you're about!" and the like—uttered, though, your Observer

(listener here) is bound to confess, in a tone that was not remarkable for its strength.

This ceased, and then came sounds as of some one busy at the mantelpiece, moving the vases about, pushing the heavy marble clock along, and rattling the smaller objects in a most peculiar way for about five minutes, when there was silence once more; and the medium suggested more singing.

This was achieved, being here the practice of enchantment, in its true acceptance, with a vengeance; and apparently it did call down spirits by singing, for on the instant of finishing, up rose the bell from the table, ringing violently, and floated right away in the air, moving about, and plainly emitting crackling sparks, like the faint discharges sometimes seen in an electrical experiment. This, too, ceased after a time; and then there came upon the table a loud bang, followed by silence as intense as the darkness by which we were surrounded.

Here the voice of the medium was heard, a light was struck, and the gas soon shed pleasant rays upon several rather blanched faces—dazzled, too, by the sudden change; while right in the middle of the table—having evidently been lifted over the heads of the company, and placed right beneath the gaselier, where there was just room for it to stand—was a great embroidery framed screen, which stood on four feet, something after the fashion of a towel-horse, but massive and of carved walnut.

It was the work of the spirits, the medium said; and he announced the séance as at an end, bade us farewell, and departed—when, of course, discussion followed. The host and a lady declared that they held the medium's hands tightly the whole time, and they were evidently sincere; while the members of the meeting formed themselves into sides—the sceptics and the believers.

Now, your Observer has set down nothing here but the simple truth concerning that which took place. His own conviction is that the medium did not leave his seat, neither did he have his hands at liberty; and, moreover, he had no apparatus. If it was juggling, it was clever in the extreme; if it was not jugglery, it was certainly puzzling. And there were peculiarities deserving of mark: the cold wind across the hands; the tingling sensation in the arms; the rising of the bell, and its emission of sparks.

Once more let your Observer tell you that

he was keenly on the alert for signs of collusion and trickery, but none seemed forthcoming; and, moreover, let him repeat that this was not a séance in a spiritualist's house, but in that of a private gentleman seeking scientifically after the truth, ready to discard the mummary, and seize upon the genuine. So far, your Observer is puzzled. He is not ready to believe in the present theories upon the subject, but he is puzzled; and to see what they could show him, he visited the entertainment of Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke, who now offer to show the same things encountered in a light or dark séance, avowedly by trickery. Here, then, is what he saw.

It is not necessary that he should allude to the first parts of the entertainment, which are very good and well worth seeing, but do not bear specially upon the question in hand—the exposures of the trickery of spiritualism. This part of the entertainment, then, commenced with what was termed a light séance, in which was shown a variety of tricks connected with a large cabinet, which opens with folding doors and stands upon turned legs, having something the appearance of a turn-up bedstead of a superior type.

It must be premised that, though the entertainers profess to give the same tricks as are performed by the spiritual mediums, they do not profess to show the *modus operandi*.

The entertainers then invite gentlemen from the audience upon the stage, to examine the cabinet, which is done, and nothing is revealed. The structure is apparently quite empty, the folding doors opening from top to bottom, and exposing the whole. Then the entertainers are securely bound hand and foot, after seating themselves one opposite to the other; and, after the fashion of the manifestations of the Davenport Brothers, a guitar, hand-bells, tambourines, a speaking trumpet, and a couple of cornopeans are placed inside. The doors are closed, and immediately hands are waved from a couple of holes in the front, the guitar is thrummed, the tambourines are beaten, the bells ring furiously—one being even tossed out; and, amidst peals of derisive laughter and hoarse noises sent through the speaking trumpet, a rough duet is blown upon the cornets. Silence ensues, the doors are thrown open, and the entertainers are found bound hand and foot, the cords and their knots untouched.

This and similar tricks follow; and then a stranger from the audience—undoubtedly a visitor, free from all confederation—goes into the cabinet, where the two bound men already sit. He submits to having his own hands tied and his eyes blindfolded. Then the tambourines and other instruments are placed in his lap, and the doors are closed.

Directly after the din begins, spirit hands appear from the openings, the bells ring, the tambourines beat; and on the noise ceasing and the doors being opened, the visitor is found with the instruments taken away, and one of them broken over his head, to hang round his neck like a collar.

Then the lights are turned off, but not until one of the tambourines has been rubbed with phosphorus. Intense darkness ensues, in the midst of which the tambourine, emitting a wavering, will-o'-the-wispish light, is seen to rise from the stage and flutter up like a bird, floating here and there in the most inconsequent manner, and right away over the audience, amongst whom it at length gently alights, somewhere about the same time as the guitar, which has also been endued with volatility.

While this is going on there is a sensation as of some light objects falling, striking the head and face, and which feel like flowers. A light is partly turned on from a dark lantern, and a cloudy-looking body is seen flitting about; after which the lights are turned up; and after a few more tricks à la Davenport, the séance is at an end.

The floating about of the tambourine is certainly the most striking part, and is most ingeniously managed. But as these are all avowedly tricks, no more need be said than that your Observer has recorded faithfully all that he has seen and heard at both séances, refraining for the present to give opinions, leaving the comparison and judgment here to the reader, who must go with mind unbiased, and have not the slightest objection to being in the dark.

IN THE DARK.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—I.

“WHAT shall we do to amuse him?”
“Oh, there is always the river; and when he is tired of that we can drive to Byssham Woods, and picnic, or take him to see the catacombs in Park-place. After all, he is not the Shah, that we need worry ourselves to death over his entertainment.”

It is I who say this, in a slightly fretful tone, which makes my good cousin look on me with mild parsonical rebuke. After all, it is rather upsetting to a mild village vicar to have to entertain a London belle and a real, live Guardsman at the same time. If I were one of his young lady parishioners, or only a cousin, he might give me the rebuke in words; being an heiress, however, and a visitor, he merely looks remonstrance.

To my great surprise, the London belle, a Miss Tremaine, and his wife's niece, puts in a word of comfort.

“I don't think you need be afraid of

Captain Gayle requiring much amusement, uncle. There is nothing he dislikes so much, in general."

Shakspeare says that a low voice is "an excellent thing in woman." Don't you think that Shakspeare sometimes tells—crams? Surely there are low voices which are not excellent, voices which seem to glide into your ear like cod liver oil—voices which creep when others run, and yet always reach you first. Laura Tremaine has a skin like white satin, dove-like eyes of rich, moist brown, and a long, round throat, on which her graceful head sways like some fair garden lily. Men rave about Laura, fight as to who shall hold her bouquet, and make compact groups round her chair directly she makes her appearance. Even Benedicks fall victims to the witchery of her liquid eyes, and happy wives grow grim at the mention of her name. The wonder is that she is not married; that at twenty-five any girl so wonderfully, seductively lovely should be still unappropriated by any one of her numerous adorers; while dozens of other girls, less beautiful, and infinitely less run after, are going off every day. My cousin, the Reverend John, says it is because she has no money; and men can't afford to marry penniless women now coals are so dear. Beauty goes down as coals go up. It is a mere item in the Stock Exchange. My cousin's wife says Laura is difficile, and hints at matches she might have made if she had only taken a little trouble.

I am rather of Laura's opinion in this matter, however, and think that fish who require so much "play" before they can be made to bite are seldom worth the landing. My fish bite soon enough, indecently soon sometimes, considering that I have had to say "No" three times since I "came out," fourteen months ago; but there is no triumph in the fact. Almost any fish will rise to a golden bait, and mine is so very glittering—I am so heavily, enormously weighted. Nineteen, no imbecility in the family, and one hundred thousand pounds! Could the most self-abnegatory of mankind refuse that? The answer is humiliatingly easy. I feel humiliatingly small whenever it occurs to me, and am thankful that Providence and my deceased parents have kindly settled my fate for me beforehand by bestowing me and my fortune in prospectu on Dallas Gayle, the only son of an old

friend, whose estate runs side by side with ours.

On second thoughts, I am not always thankful: not to-day, at any rate, when Dallas is coming for the express purpose of settling this old arrangement. It is not pleasant to be bound down to "love, honour, and obey" some one unknown, while your young affections are as yet centred in the pap bottle; to be ticketed "Sold" before nature has more than sketched you in barest monochrome, or the buyer emerged into knickerbockers. I should like to know what Dallas is like; to see whether he says, "Haw! don't know, weally; never could guess widdles," when I ask him why Dr. Kenealy and his client are alike; and subsides into gloomy and offended unintelligence when I briskly reply—

"Because they both got into trouble through Wapping (whopping) relations. How can you be so stupid?"

I should like to know whether he is the sort of man to call you a goose, and take you on his knee; or to make the whole house miserable if his little toe aches, and keep a vocabulary of pretty things to say to ladies who are not of his family. As it happens, I know nothing about Dallas. When we were wee children (when I was wee, at least), we were put to play together, and he set me in a big cucumber frame that I couldn't get out of, and went off to fish for sticklebacks in the pond by himself. After that he went to school. After that my parents died, and I went to school. After that he was at college, and, owing to his mother's death, we did not even meet in vacations; his being spent at home, mine with Aunt Fanny in Wales or Cousin John in Berkshire. After that I came out, and he, by ill luck, was with his regiment at Gibraltar. After that, just before the next season, he came home; and I, by more ill luck, took the measles, and had to rusticate at the rectory. Now I am well again—have been so some time, indeed. August has come; Miss Tremaine has withdrawn her charms from evacuated London, and come too. Dallas is coming—might have been here before if his manifold engagements had allowed him to accept the invitations sent immediately after my recovery.

And I know nothing about him—nothing more than his photos say—*i.e.*, broad shoulders, straight legs, good forehead and wide

mouth, hair curly—and the last of these was taken three years ago! He may be god or devil for aught I can tell; and yet in a few weeks I shall have fixed the day for marrying him. He will have gone through the formula of asking, "Will you marry me, Miss Jerningham?" I that of uttering the prearranged "Yes"; and it will all be settled without any romance, or sentiment, or lovers' quarrels, doubts, and agonies whatsoever. Well, after all, it is a great saving of trouble; only at nineteen one does not much care about trouble; and I should like to know why Miss Tremaine, who has sat through so many discussions of the absent hero without taking any part in them, should now, on the eve of his coming, suddenly allude to him as to one with whom she is well acquainted. In the causeless irritation of the moment I speak out.

"Do you know Captain Gayle, then, Laura? Why did you never say so?"

Her beautiful brown eyes open with gentle surprise.

"I have met him in London," she says, quietly.

"You never told me so."

"Did I not?" with a little hauteur. "Possibly I have not mentioned some hundreds of other acquaintances. It is surely not necessary."

I feel snubbed. Not now for the first time am I to learn that Miss Tremaine does not like me. The Reverend John looks at his watch.

"A quarter to five," he says, "and he is to come by the 5.10 train; isn't he, Daisy?" (This to me.) "Now, who is going to take the pony carriage into Henley to meet him? It's too hot for the water, I suppose, or you two girls could row down, and he could bring you back."

"Perhaps he can't row," I suggest. "Can't Jane go, if it is necessary that he should be met?"

John shakes his head.

"Jane can't leave Tommy, his teeth are so troublesome; and I have my sermon to write. Daisy, don't be inhospitable. What would you think if you had been met by only a servant?"

"I am not Captain Gayle, and perhaps there is nothing he dislikes so much as being met," I answer saucily, glancing at Laura.

She does not smile; on the contrary, she is very pale. A minute afterwards I hear her telling John, in her soft semi-whisper,

that she has a terrible headache. She does not think she can stay downstairs or appear at dinner this evening. John is mad on homeopathy. He darts at a big book and a little chest, and begins fumbling for the prescription. Laura stands waiting in courteous patience, her flower-like head a little bent, a stream of sunlight falling through the open French window upon her crisp white dress and clasped hands. On the window-sill I recline warm and flushed, my back against a great tub of azaleas, pink, white, and red, broken half-lights trembling through the leaves upon my insignificant little face and crumpled muslin gown. Outside the gnats are making a little black cloud in the yellow, burning sunshine. There is a smell of summer in the air, a weight of hot grass and roses and southern-scented heliotrope. John goes on puzzling over aconite and belladonna. He can't make out whether Laura is fair or not. Her eyes are dark; and in the middle the door opens, and James announces—

"Captain Gayle."

We all start. For one moment I see Laura's hands clench tight—tight, till the soft, white flesh grows darkly, cruelly red, beneath the slender fingers. For one moment, athwart that bar of gold-dusted sunshine, I see a face, ghastly pale, glaring at her in mute, wondering inquiry; and then Laura is gone, and John is shaking hands with the goodliest, kingliest man I have ever seen. Such a man! Ah, heavens! the Greeks of old made gods of them, and worshipped them openly on Mount Parnassus. It is women who deify them now, and pour out their worship in the secrecy of their own hearts; that is all the difference. And yet they are no better than other men: muscles do not mean magnanimity; size is not always coexistent with sanctity; beauty of face is not inseparable from ugliness of soul. With the generosity of nineteen, I make Dallas a present of all these inward charms to match the outer ones. With the headlong hurry of nineteen, I fall fiercely, furiously in love with the individual for whom I have been so prosaically destined from my babyhood, the individual I have been pettishly depreciating for the last six weeks. My face is scarlet as a peony when John introduces me as "Your old friend, Miss Jerminham." A shy, conscious, too delighted simper is quivering in every feature as I put out my hand to be taken in that strong, cool grasp.

Ah, well, one is only young once. "Men find women fools, and leave them cynics," saith one who, being a man, ought to know. At nineteen, folly is natural and delightful.

It is perhaps also natural that in the happy agitation of my own mind I pay small attention to a certain embarrassment and abstraction in Dallas's manner.

We sit down to talk, and he explains how he has been staying with a friend at Wargrave, and so did not come by train at all, but rode over, thus relieving John's palpable conscience pricks on the score of inhospitality. To my cousin he expresses a polite, if listless, hope that his arriving an hour earlier is not inconveniencing any one. To me he expresses a listless, if polite, satisfaction in seeing me so perfectly recovered. Once I catch a critical flash from the keen, semi-veiled depths of his blue eyes over my round and not unfreckled face, over my limp, crumpled frock, and fat, pink hands; but otherwise his manner is preoccupied, and his glance wanders to the door through which Laura vanished into the library. Afterwards I remember it all. Now, I am quite glad when he goes to his room, that I may rush to Jane's, and interrupt the spoonful of castor oil she is trying to force between Tommy's tight-locked teeth by the eager announcement—

"Oh, Jenny, he is the handsomest man you ever saw in your whole life—the most angelic nose, and eyes——"

I have not seen Miss Tremaine till then, though she is busy holding down Tommy's legs from vigorous efforts at kicking his mother's face. Now I stop short; yet surely there is no occasion for that look of cold, contemptuous surprise in her face. Is not Dallas mine, to praise or not, as I like?

Perhaps Miss Tremaine would sneer a second time if she could see the trouble I am taking to dress for dinner to-day—I, who never care how I look in general; but I do take trouble. I want to please my future lord. I turn over all my dresses, and select a silk—soft and thick, of shimmery, silvery green—not perhaps the dress best suited to nineteen; but exquisite in itself, and exquisitely made. I make Thomson strain up my hair till the back of my neck nearly cracks in two, and plait it in close yellow coils on the top of my head; and then I go downstairs, and am taken in to dinner by Dallas. Laura sits opposite to us. In

the simplest of white muslins, with one half-blown Gloire de Dijon rose nestling in the wavy masses of her gold-brown hair, with the low, red sunset behind making warm reflections over cloud-white robe and cream-white flesh, she looks more than lovely—almost divine. Dallas takes his eyes off her twice—once to ask me if I won't have some oranges à la neige, once to answer some question from Jane. For the first time in my life, I begin to believe myself capable of disliking some one almost as much as Miss Tremaine dislikes me.



ANGUISH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

TEAR THE SIXTH.

ALLSHAMITES.

I COULD not help laughing and squeezing Clara's hand as I went in; and somehow I did not feel quite so dumpy and low-spirited as I did a few hours before; while, as I sat over the thick bread and butter they

gave us—though we were what, in more common schools, they would have called par-lour boarders—I began to have a good look about me, and to take a little more notice of both pupils and teachers, giving an eye, too, at Mrs. Fortesquieu de Blount.

Only to think of the artfulness of that woman, giving herself such a grand name, and the stupidity of people themselves to be so taken in. But so it was; for I feel sure it was nothing else but the Fortesquieu de Blount which made mamma decide upon sending me to the Cedars. And there I sat, wondering how it would be possible for me to manage to get through a whole year, when I declare if I did not begin to sigh terribly. It was the coming back to all this sort of thing, after fancying it was all done with; while the being marched out two and two, as we had been that day, all round the town and along the best walks, for a perambulating advertisement of the Cedars, Allsham, was terrible to me. It seemed so like making a little girl of me once more, when I felt so old that I could feel a red spot burning in each cheek when I went out; and I told Clara of them, but she said they were caused by vexation and French lessons, and not by annoyance; while, when I looked angrily round at her, she only laughed.

It would not have mattered so much if the teachers had been nice, pleasant, lady-like bodies, and would have been friendly and kind; but they would not, for the sole aim of their lives seemed to be to make the pupils uncomfortable, and find fault; and the longer I was there the more I found this out, which was, as a matter of course, only natural. If we were out walking—now we were walking too fast, so that the younger pupils could not keep up with us; or else we were said to crawl so that they were treading on our heels; and do what we would, try how we would, at home or abroad, we were always wrong. Then over the lessons they were always snapping and catching us up and worrying, till it was miserable; while as to that Miss Furness, I believe honestly that nothing annoyed her more than a lesson being said perfectly, and so depriving her of the chance of finding fault. Why is it that people engaged in teaching must always be sour and disappointed-looking, and ready to treat those who are their pupils as if they were so many enemies? I suppose that it is caused by the great pressure of know-

ledge leaving room for nothing mild and amiable. Of course Patty Smith was very stupid; but it was enough to make the poor, fat, podgy thing ten times more stupid to hear how they did scold her for not doing her exercises. I declare it was quite a charity to do them for her, as it was not in her nature to have done them herself. There she would sit, with her forehead all wrinkled up, and her eyebrows quarrelling, while her poor eyes were nearly shut; and I'm sure her understanding was quite shut up, so that nothing could go either in or out.

Oh! I used to be so vexed, and could at any time have pulled off that horrid Mrs. Blunt's turban when she used to bring in her visitors, and then parade them through the place, displaying us all, and calling up first one and then another, as if to show off what papa would call our points.

The vicar of Allsham used to be the principal and most constant visitor; and he always made a point of taking great interest in everything, and talking to us, asking us Scripture questions; coming on a Monday—a dreadful old creature—so as to ask us about his sermon which he preached on the previous morning; and they were such terrible sermons that no one could understand—all about heresies, and ites, and saints with hard names; and he always had a habit of seeing how many parentheses he could put inside one another, like the lemons from the bazaars, till you got to be quite lost, and did not know which was the original, or what it all meant; and I'm sure sometimes he did not know where he had got to, and that was why he stopped for quite two minutes blowing his nose so loudly. I'm afraid I told him some very wicked stories sometimes when he questioned me; while if he asked me once whether I had been confirmed, he asked me twenty times.

I'm sure I was not so very wicked before I went down to Allsham; but I quite shudder now when I think of what a wretch I grew, nicknaming people and making fun of serious subjects; and oh, dear! I'm afraid to talk about them almost. The vicar used to sit in his pew in the nave in the afternoon, and let the curate do all the service; and I used to feel as if I could box his ears, for he would stand at the end of his seat, half facing round, and then, in his little, fat, round,

important way, go on gabbling through the service, as if he wasn't satisfied with the way the curate was going on, and must take it all out of his mouth. He used to put the poor young man out terribly, and the clerk too; so that the three of them used to tie the service up in a knot, or make a clumsy trio of it, with the school children tripping up their heels by way of chorus.

And then the old gentleman would be so loud, and would not mind his points, and would read the responses in the same fierce, defiant way in which he said the Creed in the morning, just as if he was determined that everybody should hear how he believed. While when the poor curate has been preaching, he has folded his arms and stared at the poor young fellow, now shaking his head, and now blowing his nose; while the curate would look hot, and keep looking down at him as much as to say, "May I advance that?" or "Won't that do, sir?" till it was quite pitiful.

Then the vicar used to bring his two daughters with him to the Cedars, to pat, and condescend, and patronise, and advise: two dreadful creatures that Clara called the giraffes, they were so tall and thin, and hook-nosed, and quite a pair in appearance; while they dressed exactly alike, in white crape long shawls and lace bonnets in summer; while hooked on to their father, one on each arm, as the fat, red-faced, little old gentleman used to come up the gravel walk, he used to look just like a chubby old angel, with a pair of tall, scraggy, half-open wings.

But though the two old frights were so much alike in appearance, they never agreed upon any point; and the poor people used to have a sad time of it with first one and then the other. They were always bringing books for the poor people's reading, and both had their peculiar ideas upon the subject of what was suitable. They considered that they knew exactly what every one ought to read, and what every one else ought to read was just the very reverse of what they ought to read themselves. But then they don't stand alone in that way, as publishers know when they bring out so many works of a kind that they know their customers will buy—not to read, but to give away—very good books, of course.

It was all very well to call them the giraffes, and that did very well for their height; but as soon as I found out how one

was all for one way, and the other immediately opposed her sister, declaring she was all wrong, I christened them Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. It was very dreadful—wasn't it?—and unladylike, and so on; but it did seem to fit so, and all the girls took it up and enjoyed it; only that odious Celia Blang must tell Miss Furness, and Miss Furness must tell Mrs. Blunt, and then of course there was a terrible hubbub, and I was told that it was profane in one sense, and bad taste in another, and disgusting language in another; for the word "doxy" was one that no lady should ever bring her lips to utter; when if I did not make worse of it—I mean in my own conscience—by telling a most outrageous story, and saying I was very sorry, when I wasn't a bit.

Oh, the visitors! I used to be sick of them; for it was just as if we girls were kept to show. I used to call the place Mrs. Blunt's Menagerie, and got into a scrape about that; for everything I said used to be carried to Mrs. Blunt—not that I cared, only it made me tell stories, and say I was sorry when I was not. The curate and his wife used to come sometimes. A curious-looking couple they were, too, who seemed as if they had found matrimony a mistake, and did not approve of it; for they always talked in a quiet, subdued way, and walked as far apart from one another as they could.

He had not much to say for himself; but he used to make the best he could of it, and stretch his words out a tremendous length, saying pa-a-st and la-st; so that when he said the word everlasting in the service, it was perfectly phonographic, and you stared at him in dismay, as if there really never would be an end to it. We used to ask one another, when he had gone, what he had been talking about; but we never knew—only one had two or three long-stretched-out words here, and a few more there. But it did not matter; and I think we liked him better than his master, the vicar. As for his wife, she had a little lesson by heart, and she said it every time she came, with a sickly smile, as she smoothed one side at a time of her golden locks, which always looked rough; and hers were really golden locks—about eight-carat gold, I should say, like Patty Smith's trumpery locket; for they showed the red, coppery alloy very strongly—too strongly for my taste, which favours pale gold.

Pray don't for a moment imagine that I mean any vulgar play upon words, and am alluding to any vegetable in connection with the redness of the Mrs. Curate's hair; for she was a very decent sort of woman, if she would not always have asked me how I was, and how was mamma, and how was papa, and how I liked Allsham, and whether I did not think Mrs. de Blount a pattern of deportment. And then, as a matter of course, I was obliged to tell another story; so what good could come to me from the visits of our vicar and his followers?

TEAR THE SEVENTH.

A DOWNFALL.

I DECLARE my progress with my narrative seems for all the world like papa carving a pigeon pie at a picnic: there were the claws sticking out all in a bunch at the top, as much as to say there were plenty of pigeons inside; but when he cut into it, there was just the same result as the reader must find with this work—nothing but disappointing bits of steak, very hard and tiresome; but I can assure you, like our cook at home, all the pigeons were put in, and if you persevere you will be as successful as papa was at last, though I must own that pigeon is rather an unsatisfactory thing for a hungry person.

Heigho! what a life did I live at the Cedars: sigh, sigh, sigh, morning, noon, and night. I don't know what I should have done if it had not been for the garden, which was very nice, and the gardener always very civil. The place was well kept up, of course for an advertisement; and when I was alone in the garden, which was not often, I used to talk to the old man or one of his underlings, while they told of their troubles; and it's very singular, but though I thought the place looked particularly nice, I learnt from the old man that it was like every garden I had seen before, nothing like what it might be if there were hands enough to keep it in order. I spoke to papa about that singular coincidence, and he laughed, and said that it was a problem that had never yet been solved, how many men it would take to keep a garden in thorough order: "Gardener's Manual."

There was one spot I always favoured during the early days of my stay. It was situated on the north side of the house, where there was a dense, shady horse chest-

nut, and beneath it a fountain in the midst of rockery—a fountain that never played, for the place was too oppressive and dull; but a few tears would occasionally trickle over the stones, while the leaves grew long and pallid, and the blossoms of such flowers as grew here were mournful, and sad, and colourless. It seemed just the spot to sit and sigh as I bent over the ferns growing from between the lumps of stone; while you never could go, even on the hottest days, without finding some flower or another with a tear in its eye.

I hope no one will laugh at this latter conceit, and call it poetical or trivial; for if I like to write in a sad strain, and so express my meaning when I allude to dew-wet petals, where is the harm?

But to descend to everyday life. I talked a great deal just now about the different visitors we had, and the behaviour of our vicar in the church; and really it was a very nice little church, though I did not like the behaviour of some of the people who frequented it. Allsham being a small country town, as a matter of course, it possessed several grandees, some among whom figured upon Mrs. Blunt's circular; but it used to be so annoying to see about half a dozen of these big people cluster outside the porch in the churchyard, morning and afternoon, to converse apparently, though it always seemed to me that they stood there to be bowed to by the tradesmen and mechanics, while they never entered the church themselves until the clergyman was in the reading desk, and the soft introductory voluntary was being played on the organ by the Fraulein, who played in the afternoon, the organist in the morning. Then the grandees would come marching in slowly and pompously, as a flock of geese one after another into a barn, proceeding majestically to their seats; when they would look into their hats for a few moments, seat themselves, and then look round, as much as to say, "We are here now. You may begin." It used to annoy me from its regularity, and the noise their boots made while the clergyman was praying; while they might just as well have come in a minute sooner; but then it was the custom at Allsham, and I was but a visitor.

I did not get into any trouble until I had been there a month, when Madame Blunt must give me an imposition of a hundred lines for laughing at her, when I'm sure no

one could have helped it had they tried ever so hard. In the school-room there was a large, flat, boarded thing, about a foot high, all covered with red druggist; and upon this used to stand Mrs. Blunt's table and chair, so that she was a great deal higher than any one else, and could look over the room easily. Then so sure as she used to sit down upon this dais, as she used to call it, there was a great deal of fuss and arranging of skirts, and settling of herself into her chair, which she would then give two or three pushes back, and then fidget forward; and altogether she would make more bother than one feels disposed to make sometimes upon being asked to play before company, when the music stool requires so much arranging.

Now, upon the day in question she had come in with her head all on one side, and pulling a very long face, pretending the while to be very poorly, because she was half an hour late, and we had been waiting for the lesson she was down in the table to give. Then, as we had often had it before, and knew perfectly well what was coming, she suddenly caught sight of the clock.

"Dear me, Miss Sloman! Bless my heart, that clock is very much too fast," she would exclaim. "It cannot be nearly so late as that."

"I think it is quite right, Mrs. de Blount," Miss Sloman would say, shaking her moustache.

"Oh, dear me, no, Miss Sloman; nothing like right. My pendule is quite different."

Of course we girls nudged one another—that is not a nice word, but poked or elbowed seems worse; and then, thinking I did not know, Clara whispered to me that her ladyship always went on like that when she was down late of a morning. But I had noticed it several times before; while there it was, always the same tale, and the silly old ostrich never once saw that we could see her when she had run her stupid old head in the sand.

Well, according to rule, she came in, found fault with the clock, but took care not to have it altered to match her gimcrack French clock in her bed-room, which she always called her pendule. Then she climbed on to the dais; and, as usual, she must be very particular about the arrangement of the folds of her satin dress, which was one of the company or parent-seeing robes, now taken into everyday use.

"Look out," whispered Clara to me.

"What for?" I said, in the same low tone.

But instead of answering she pretended to be puzzled with something in her lesson, and got up to go and ask Miss Furness what it meant.

But all this while Mrs. Blunt was getting up and sitting down, and rustling about like an old hen in a dustbath, to get herself in position; when all at once there was a sharp scream and a crash; and, on jumping up, I could see the lady principal upon the floor behind the dais, while she had pulled over the table, and the ink was trickling down upon her neck.

Of course, any lady in her senses would have got up directly, and tried to repair the mischief; but not she, for there she lay groaning as if in terrible pain, while Miss Furness and Miss Sloman, one at either hand, were trying to raise her, the Fraulein the while dragging off the table, and exclaiming in German; but not the slightest impression was made upon the recumbent mass—which seems to me the neatest way of saying "lying-down lump."

Clara ran out of the room, holding her handkerchief to her mouth, but pretending all the while to be frightened out of her wits; and then what a fuss there was getting the fallen one into her seat again—but not on the dais—bathing her face, chafing her hands, sprinkling her with eau de Cologne, holding salts to her nose; and it was just as she was groaning the loudest and sighing her worst that Clara came back, and began to look in her droll, comical way at me.

I had not seen through the trick at first; but all at once I recalled Clara's saying "Look out!" when it flashed through my mind in an instant that she had moved back the chair and table upon the dais, so that at the first good push back of her chair the poor woman fell down; and so, what with the thoughts of the wicked trick, and Mrs. Blunt's long-drawn face, and Clara's droll eyes peering at me so saucily, I could not help it, but burst out into a loud laugh.

Talk of smelling-salts, and bathing, and chafing, why they were as nothing in comparison with that laugh. Poor Mrs. Blunt! I dare say she did hurt herself, for she was stout and heavy; but she was herself again in an instant, and looking at me in a horribly furious manner. But I did not care—not a bit; and I could not help it, for it

was not my fault; but I could see how that she thought that it was, as she burst out—

"Miss Bozerne!"

"Such unladylike behaviour," chimed in Miss Furness.

"So cruel!" exclaimed Miss Sloman.

"Ach ten!" ejaculated the Fraulein; while I caught sight of Miss Murray looking quite pained at me.

"I did not think that a young lady in my establishment would have been guilty of such atrocious conduct," exclaimed Mrs. Blunt, furiously.

"No, indeed," said Miss Furness.

"Something entirely new," exclaimed Miss Sloman, tossing her pretty head.

And there stood poor Miss Bozerne—poor me—feeling so red and ears tingling; for though I said that I did not care, I did, and very much too; though nothing should have made me confess that I knew the cause of the accident; and though all the while I was sure that dreadful Mrs. Blunt thought I had moved her chair, I bore it, determined not to betray Clara, little thinking the while that the time would come when, upon a much more serious occasion, I should be dependent upon her generosity. But it really did seem too bad of the tiresome thing, who was holding down her head, and thoroughly enjoying the whole scene; and no doubt it was excellent fun for her, but it was very hard upon poor me.

"Leave the room, Miss Bozerne, and retire to your dormitory," exclaimed Mrs. Blunt at last, in a very awful tone of voice, and putting on every scrap of dignity she could command.

I felt just as if I should have liked to have said "I won't;" but I controlled myself, and, making a sweeping curtsy, I went out, feeling very spiteful. And then, when I was upstairs and had received my hundred line French imposition, I commenced work by writing a cross letter to mamma, and telling her that I would not stay in the nasty school any longer; and declaring that if she did not come soon and fetch me, I should run away.

But though it was a very smartly written, satirical letter, I tore it up afterwards; for something seemed to whisper to me that—that—well, that— But if those who have read so far in my confessions will have patience, and quietly keep on reading leaf after leaf, trying the while to sympathize with me, no doubt they will form a judg-

ment for themselves of the reason which prevented me from sending the letter to mamma, and made me try to put up with the miseries of that select establishment for young ladies—the Cedars, Allsham.

WORK FOR THE WITS.

A PUZZLE indeed: "A-v-r-e-l, C-o-f-f-o-c-k." A specimen, this, of one of the addresses sent through the Post Office. "Avrel, Coffock," and written in a straggling hand, with a pen that evidently had an inclination, hard to curb, for running into the corner of the envelope and making loops as large as lassoes. The letter is one of many sent to one particular desk at St. Martin's-le-Grand, where certain clerks make it their study to battle with ignorance, and to untie twisted characters sometimes as puzzling as the celebrated Gordian knot.

Comparison, sound and deep thought are often required, but long practice makes great perfection and skill; and at a glance, in spite of the hideous scrawl of the illiterate writer, this address is without trouble deciphered.

The very ignorant are peculiarly phonetic in their spelling, and, regarding the aspirate as an unnecessary letter, "Avrel" is at once decided to be meant for Haverhill; and "Coffock," with the first letter softened, becomes the rustic spelling of Suffolk. Such peculiar instances of direction abound, and the address is generally re-written.

The wonderful handwriting and irregularity of the letters it is impossible to reproduce here, but the following are some of the puzzles with which the postal authorities have had to deal. "Bad ford Socar" is easily resolved into "Bedford-square," but here is one not so easy: the name is perfectly undecipherable, but the letter is addressed to some one at "Sagusha Carrecks, Secucks," solved as "Chichester Barracks, Sussex."

Next comes a letter to a young lady at "8 to Ledd And All Streat, London Sittey," which needs no explanation, unless the reader trips over the eighty-two. Here is the love-lorn maiden writing to her soldier lad, and, if one could have seen such a letter years ago, certainly it would have been sealed with a thimble—the address is "frist pertlan Wenant Bakes, london alsr-Were;" in other words—"First Battalion, Wellington Barracks, London, or elsewhere."

One gentleman is addressed as residing "Exsom, Norsombloom," for Hexham, Northumberland; another at "Ironfeathers," a good phonetic attempt at Higham Ferrers; and directly after one comes upon a letter sent to one in a "Youen infinery." Rather

a "Sad, low ebb in affairs to be in a union infirmary.

Names of recipients are all suppressed, otherwise it would be almost a feat to reproduce the first lines upon an envelope whose latter ones are "Hiva Box, Near Loue Green." However, the letter was safely delivered at Iver, Bucks. There was not much to guide the ear, and less for the eye, in the following—"Faration," especially when in the writing there is great doubt as to whether the first letter is F, J, or L. However, it was made out correctly to be Farringdon.

The scribe who wrote the next must have spent an hour with his up and down strokes—very up some of them, and very down some others—the result being, in large round hand—"Ish-kent, near Sanvige;"—"Ash, Kent, near Sandwich;" a cockney, the writer, no doubt. Rowley Regis, near Dudley, is rendered "Rowel and Readis," and the Isle of Wight "Aleright," with both of which there was a hint in the sound; but now we have one of a kind that would inevitably produce premature baldness in the clerks if they were frequent. Fancy "Sunstorbenche" for your guide to some town or village: how long would you be before you made out that it was St. Albans?

"One" is rather a short-hand way of spelling "Olney;" but with "Bockingom shor" afterwards there is something of a clue to follow. Certainly it was a wonder, but the following found an owner at a suburban village: "tempel grove cottage, dear Mrs. Gurdner friday night." Surely this was enough to make a clerk "give it up." "Ner Lipocance" was a very good shot at "Liphook, Hants," rather better than "Rombesey near the gas works" for "Bermondsey," or "Serlyance At Sea" for "St. Leonards-on-Sea."

The friends of the defenders of our land do not shine at all in the graphies; here is a specimen:—"S F Gauces 2 Batt Wigsudaw Borceau ad bks;" rather a painful manner of expressing "Scots Fusilier Guards, Second Battalion, Windsor Barracks," especially when letters have to be guessed at, and the last word trails off into other nebulous letters to which the pen could not give form. Again, a military letter is addressed to Private So-and-so, at "Furdey C. I." Rather a bold stroke to express "Jersey, Channel Islands."

To return to the civilian element, here is

a letter for "Lankchire," and another for "Bouckemey Shear," the characters forming the last word twining and intertwining in hopeless confusion, like so many eels in a huckster's pail. "Shinerenester. With heaste" was no doubt delivered at Cirencester by the postman at a full trot, and gave as much pleasure as did this to another private, in "Scool of Goonery Rile Host Tillery, Showebry Excess." Letter after letter, whose quaintness is in the comical writing, and the peculiar arrangement of the lines; two or three have been written as if with the left hand, and read from right to left, the direction looking like lines of Eastern characters; and now again commence those whose peculiarity is in the spelling—"3Pign 3ss3Z" was for a young lady at Epping, Essex, the name on the envelope being almost as much chopped up as the sausages of the famous little town. Another for Sydenham is condensed into "Sideom."

This next must be from "the young man who keeps company": "Eliza —, pruspect veller, fun Bridgewell," and it found its way to "Prospect Villas, Tunbridge Wells." There is "fun" in that, at least. Here is another St. Albans letter to a tradesman: "Mr. —, Fishmunger, San tal dants, upset ther taund pump, harf at Sheare." Doubtless the proximity to the town pump was handy, especially opposite; but let us hope it was not "upset."

The spelling seems to grow more wild as one proceeds, for here is "huper Olloy" for Upper Holloway; "fine Stitfird" is rather a poor introduction to Fenny Stratford; "Lattonbuddard" for Leighton Buzzard; and "Knt" or "Cant" for Kent; but nothing, save a sight of the fac-similes kept at the General Post Office, can give a fair idea of the peculiarity of the caligraphy, the confusion of loops and up and down strokes.

In the majority of instances, far from having full command over their pens, the writers seem to have been the slaves of the tiny implement, with the consequence that the nibs have run riot all over the envelope, from corner to corner and back again. Capitals make their appearance in the centre of words, and other words that have beginnings are without end. It is rare, though, that a letter is not sent to its rightful destination, for there are cool heads always busy over these Post Office puzzles.

IN THE DARK.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—II.

DALLAS has been here a week. It is eight days and eight nights this morning since I first saw him—since the day we sat side by side at dinner, and he stared persistently at Laura Tremaine. He does not stare at her now. He seldom looks at, hardly ever speaks to her; and she avoids him with almost marked decision. I need not have been sulky that first evening; for ever since then he has devoted himself to me, not obtrusively, but with a sort of lazy, bien entendu attention—a half languid, half good-tempered readiness to gratify my little whims and pleasures, which is, I suppose, all that a muscular young man is capable of in the way of courtship in these used-up days. He has rowed me—all of us—on the river several times. He has ridden with me, and played croquet with me. He has even read aloud a little, and submitted to be read to—closing his eyes, however, and sleeping very sweetly and soundly during the latter enjoyment. John and Jane treat us exactly like engaged people. I suppose we are engaged; but somehow I thought he would have said something first. Perhaps he will; perhaps he is only waiting to know me a little better. He can't guess that I like him—that I haven't already fallen in love with some one else. He can't mean to let it be all "taken for granted." I have begun to puzzle a good bit over this; and to be—oh! so grateful for those three prompt rejections. Could I ever have worshipped any one as I do Dallas?

It is afternoon. A golden haze hangs over the farther bank of the river. Great blots of pink and scarlet petals relieve the flat, hot greenness of the close-shaven lawn. Clumps of overblown roses, masses of scorching scarlet geraniums, shake down fresh contributions of colour at every passing step or gentle breeze. Above, the sky is one vault of pure, dazzling blue. Below, the river is one sheet of dimpling, dancing silver flame. Only under one bank, where the trees hang out their broad, thick-leaved boughs, there is a band of shadow, dark, cool, and sharply defined against the blaze beyond. There our boat is lying, a heap of shawls and parasols in the stern, all ready for an outing. Dallas, looking more gloriously handsome than any old world Hyperion, in his boating flannels, is splicing one of the

tiller ropes. Laura and I, in huge shady hats and cool grass-cloth costumes, are standing on the bank, discussing which shall take a first turn at the assistant oar. Jane, a little higher up on the lawn, is trying to bribe Tommy to let go of her dress, and cease his ear-piercing howls to be allowed to accompany us. We are going to show Dallas the catacombs at Park-place.

Do you know what these catacombs are? If you have ever been at or in the vicinity of Henley-on-Thames you do, for they are one of the show places in the neighbourhood—if not, it is ten to one you have never heard of them; so I may as well mention that they are supposed to have been excavated by the Romans; that they are now the property of a gentleman residing in a pretty country house on the banks of the river; and that they tunnel, with as many multifarious windings as an ant's nest, one side of a hill in his domains. All visitors to Henley and Wargrave go to see them; and a gardener takes you in at one entrance and out at another, and receives unremonstratingly any donations you may choose to proffer to his acceptance.

This individual is beside us now, for we are all grouped round a rough doorway, much encumbered with brambles, and cut in the side of the hill. As he unlocks it, a faint fresh smell of apples issues from the darkness; specimens of that fruit being placed on jutting ledges of the rock, in order to enable one to "follow one's nose"—sight being out of the question. Jane and I are behind the guide. She is lamenting that she has got on a dark dress—it will be irretrievably ruined in those dark, dusty passages. Dallas and Laura have dropped a little behind. He seems to be speaking earnestly, and she is whitely, wofully pale. As I glance back at them, she comes hurriedly forward, and suggests that she should stay outside. She is tired; she has been there before, and—and— It is the first time I have ever seen Laura Tremaine agitated. Jane will not hear of leaving her. She will be nervous herself without Laura. There may be strange tourists about the grounds, and Laura would have to find her way alone down the hill.

Dallas turns round.

"You *must* come," he says, in deep, authoritative undertone.

And Laura yields. I glide on quickly after the guide. Huffed? Yes, decidedly huffed. Why should Laura obey my master?

We are all in thick darkness now. Our footsteps make no sound in the light, pulverous soil. I seem some way in advance, for Jane's voice, cheering on her eldest hope, comes to me dimly from the background. No one else speaks. There might be no one else in the catacombs; and the apples smell stronger than ever in the close, damp air. I can never bear the scent of an apple now. It makes me sick and shuddering in a moment.

Presently, quite close behind, there is a low, eager whisper, then a quick rustle, and some one—some one in grass-cloth like me—glides rapidly past me without a sound. The next moment there is a hand, a strong, stern hand, on my shoulder, and I hear the whisper again, in my ear this time.

"Why did you do that?" it says as angrily as is consistent with perfect lowness. "Will it hurt you for me to speak to you this once?"

By "that" I suppose he means the involuntary start I give as his hand tightens on me. Instead of answering, I begin to tremble like a child. Has the moment for mutual avowals come at last?

"I *must* speak," Dallas says, in the same intensely earnest whisper, "and you must listen. Oh, my darling, forgive me. I cannot bear it any longer. I tried—God knows I tried, not to love you; to keep out of your way. It was you who came here voluntarily. Why did you? In Heaven's name, why did you, unless—"

He breaks off, and I can make no answer. I came—of course you know that from the first—that he might have an opportunity of settling that old arrangement; but I can hardly say as much. His hand glides from my shoulder to my waist. His voice goes on, persuasive now, with a perfect tenderness in it which I have never heard before—shall never, never hear again in this world or the next.

"My darling, my queen lily, I love you. You know I love you. I have nothing whatever but love to offer you while my father lives. It is the blindest, cruelest selfishness to try and lead you, who could marry a duke if you would, into utter poverty." (Poverty! and what of my hundred thousand pounds, and his good old place? His next words answer the last query.) "Haylands is fearfully, heavily mortgaged. My father had hard ado to keep it from old Jennings, and I've

helped to encumber it with my extravagance. He can't cut me out of the entail; but if I refuse to marry as I am ordered, he can and will stop my present income, and turn me out of the house during his life. Laura, can you forgive me for first trying to win your love, when I knew it would be ruin for you; and then, too late, tearing myself away, and trying^a—trying with all my might—to sell myself to that little foolish thing and her money. Laura, I cannot. Worthless, mean, and extravagant as I am, I can't do that while there is even one chance that you would love me well enough to brave poverty at my side. Oh! my darling, tell me if it is so—tell me honestly; and I will leave here to-morrow, sell out, and slave day and night till I've earned some sort of a home for you. It may be long waiting, but if you love me, my beautiful sweet, if you only love me—" For one moment he pauses, with something like a gasp; then, with a sort of fierce desperation—"If not, I may as well go to the dogs, or marry that red-cheeked child, with all her chatter and gush. It would be much the same, as far as my happiness goes, once you were lost to me."

He has hurried out these words, one after another, with only that one pause, and then he finds no interruption. From the moment that he utters *her* name—the moment that it flashes on me that he is speaking to her, not me—all power of answer, or speech of any sort, has ebbed from me; and yet, oh, Dallas, Dallas! that I could ever have been so blindly, madly conceited as to dream of your caring for me when she was by! that the shattering of my dream should have driven every drop of warm life-blood in my body back to my heart, and made me reel and stagger so that, but for that supporting arm, I should have fallen down there at his feet, and betrayed the story of my own utter folly and weakness.

Thank God, he holds me too tightly for that! Thank God that, before he can speak again, Jane and Tommy are stumbling on us from behind! There could not be a better restorative. Dallas drops his arm as if shot, and turns to speak to her with more readiness than men in general show in such emergencies. I rush blindly on in the dark, knocking myself against sharp corners, slipping past Laura, and almost thrusting the guide against the wall

as I dash out into the great, glittering glare of yellow sunlight and green, green earth.

Where are "my red cheeks and chatter" now? Ah, reader, have not you known what it is to feel horribly, deathly pale; to know by intuition that you are whiter than any chalk marks on your dress? Laura is pale too. There is an expression of mingled fright, joy, and sorrow on her face, which only I understand. She attaches herself to Jane obstinately. I attach myself to Tommy, whom I do not favour in general; but anything rather than walk with Dallas—Dallas, who is not pale, but flushed with a sort of proud, happy audacity. Does not silence give consent? Little wonder his eyes rest with such open, daring tenderness on Laura's downcast face, all the livelong journey home.

We are there at last. I detect and thwart Dallas in an attempt at speaking to Miss Tremaine aside. She goes to her room. We below join in complaints of the heat, and abuse of the catacombs.

"So damp, so dirty."

"Daisy has not got back her colour yet."

"Of course not. Bad air always makes me pale. In the Metropolitan Underground I am positively ill—sick—as sick as I can be, always."

This in a sort of defiant reply to Dallas's mild look of disgust. He goes to his room, "to have a smoke," he says. I hear the key turn in the lock. It is a noisy key. I shall be sure to hear it when he unlocks it again; and Laura's room is at the other side of the house. I don't think they could meet without my knowing it, and I am determined they shall not—not till I am out of the house, and far, far away.

Unwilling to lose time, and in a miserable, feverish hurry, which will not let me rest, I open fire, directly we are alone, with—

"Cousin John, I am going away."

"Going away," he repeats, stupefied. "Where?"

"Back to Wales, to grandmamma; and to-morrow. Please don't say a word. Please don't, Jane—I *must* go."

"But why? What is the matter?" they both cry together, in utter amazement.

"Simply that I have made up my mind that I won't and can't marry Dallas Gale."

"Not—marry—Captain Gale!" repeats John, more astounded than ever. "Why,

I thought—we all thought—you were quite in—you liked him immensely."

"Nonsense, Daisy," Jane puts in, before I can speak. "This is some childish folly. You are jealous of Laura, you silly girl."

"Laura!" repeats John; "why he—she—they never speak—never—"

"Of course not," interrupts his wife. "Daisy, don't be foolish. Laura shall go away if you like. Indeed, her stepmother wants her back."

And Jane nods at me encouragingly. I burst out, in indignation—

"She shall not go away. Jane, how can you? I am not jealous of—of any one. I—I do not want to marry Dallas. I—I don't like him."

How loud we must have been talking! After all, I have not heard the key turn. As I turn round from uttering this tremendous lie, I see Dallas standing in the open doorway, his face pale with cold, haughty indignation and surprise.

We are all limp and gaping in conscious guilt. There is a dead silence. He breaks it first—

"I really beg your pardon for my interruption. The door being wide open, I did not know that you were engaged in a discussion which—"

His blue, beautiful eyes are blazing with utter scorn and wrath in my direction. He can hardly speak with anger; and yet I, who would have been frightened out of my life usually—I, whose cowardice is proverbial, am not afraid now. There are moments when one can dare anything, and this is one of them.

"Dallas," I say—somehow I have always called him by his Christian name—"don't be offended. I should have had to say it some time, and it is better now than later."

"It? Really, I hardly understand," he says, turning on me with barely veiled irony. "I was not aware that I had—"

"Asked me to marry you?" I interrupt, feverishly. "No, of course not; but as it was always arranged by our fathers, and was to come off before I was twenty, I thought I had better speak honestly before you liked me enough to ask me."

"Thank you," he says, satirically. "No one can complain of your frankness, Miss Jerningham, I am sure. The whole house could bear witness to it. Then I am to

understand you throw me over, and will have none of me."

Do what he will, a great, glad light is creeping over his face.

He forgets even poverty in joy at escaping from me.

"Yes," I say, firmly. "I am sorry about the property—you would have managed it better than I; but I can't help it, and you will have the codicil, anyhow."

"What codicil? Daisy, are you mad?" cries Jane, finding voice at last. "Captain Gayle, do not mind. She is not herself. It was the sun to-day—the bad air. She does not know what she is saying."

"Yes, Jane, I do," I answer, steadily. "He does not, and you don't; but when papa died he left a codicil in his will, to the effect that if I refused Dallas, he was to have five thousand pounds as a compensation for the disappointment. It is not much out of one hundred thousand pounds," I add, laughing a little bitterly, "but then it is unencumbered. It is all for 'yourself, and there is no *me* to be taken with it."

"My dear Daisy," sobs Jane, beginning to cry with vexation, "as if losing you were not worse than any other loss—than—"

"Miss Jerningham evidently puts 'mercenary' down among the list of my unlikeable qualities," observes Dallas, with stinging emphasis, which almost brings the tears into my eyes.

He need not be so cruel. In desperate fear of breaking down, I go up to him, both my hands outstretched in childish deprecation.

"Don't! Indeed, I never thought that. I do like you as a friend, but marriage is so different, and you cannot care much about me yet. I—I'm not very nice—not at all, I think."

The tears are very near the brim now; in another minute they will be over. For one moment his hands clasp mine; for one moment his eyes look down kindly on me. Because I am making him so happy, he will even forgive my impertinence.

"I think you nice," he says.

And then we both hear *her* step upon the stairs. I pull my hands away, and rush, without looking at her, away up to my own room, to howl at leisure over my packing.

I have never seen either of them since.

ANGUISH IN PRINT.

IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE.

TEAR THE EIGHTH.

WICKEDNESS AND MISERY.

IN spite of my feeling the time to be a dreadful drag, somehow or another it slipped away; though I shudder now when I recall that during that lapse of time I was growing more and more wicked every day; and matters were slowly progressing towards the dire hour when my happiness was wrecked for ever—buoyant bark though it was—upon the shoals and quicksands surrounding the fair land of love and joy.

It would, perhaps, look particular, or I would repeat that last musical sentence, which seems to describe so aptly my feelings. But to resume. One could not help liking French, though, when one had such a teacher; and, oh, how I used to work to get my exercises perfect! Clara used to laugh and tease, but then I could fight her with her own weapons. I did not mind her beginning to say the verb "*aimer*," because I always used to retaliate with something Italian, and she was beaten directly; for any one with half an eye could see why she was so fond of that especial study.

How the monster with the short, crisp beard used to stare at me! just as he did at the very first, when mamma was with me; and for a long time I used to fancy that every teacher and pupil must see how his eyes were directed at me, though I suppose really there was nothing for any one to see. But, oh, what a battle I used to have when lessons were over, and I had settled down into a quiet, dreamy way. Then used to come the face of Mr. St. Purre, the curate in town, to look at me reproachfully, so sadly that I used to have many a good cry; and I



hardly knew how to bear it. And certainly, before I left London, I used to think a great deal of Mr. St. Purre; and I'm sure no young lady was more regular at church than I was. I was there every morning at eight, at the prayers, when really it was such a job in the cold weather to get up and dressed—nicely dressed—in time. Then, I never missed one Wednesday or Friday, nor a saint's day; and as to Sundays, I went three times as a matter of course. While papa was wicked enough to say that so much going to church did not constitute true religion, and he did not believe in it. Wasn't it shocking? I did ask myself once, though, whether I should have gone so often if there had been a different curate.

I must own that I certainly did think a great deal of Mr. St. Purre before I left London, as I said before; but then it was not my wish to leave—I was forced away, and I had not dreamed of the noble exile then: the tender chords of sympathy for others' sorrows had not then been touched. I had not learned to pity one who was driven by a cruel tyrant from home and estate to gain his bread upon a cold shore by imparting the "*langue douce*" of his "*chère patrie*." I had not then seen the stern but handsome refugee—so handsome as, after all, I am compelled to think him; so interesting even in the little errors of pronunciation of our tongue. I always thought French a great bother until I heard him speak it, and then I grew to quite idolize the bright, sparkling tongue. Shakspeare was, of course, soon banished to make way for Molière; while, after reading to him, Monsieur Achille would perhaps say a few words of praise, every one of which would make my face tingle so that I felt red right up to the roots of my hair.

But the Cedars was, after all, a dreadfully tiresome place, and seemed made up of aggravation. What was the use of having a lawn for croquet, with the hoops all so ostentatiously displayed, as if the young ladies could always enjoy a little recreation there, when, so sure as one had a mallet in hand and a foot was pressed down upon a ball, squeak, screech, or croak came the voice of Miss Furness, Miss Sloman, or the Fraulein, to announce some new lesson, when, of course, we had to go in? I declare if I did not, over and over again, say that vulgar, wicked word that I had learned of papa, and tried so hard to break myself

of, though it seemed of not the slightest use, and the more I tried the more it would keep poking itself into my mind—I declare if I did not, over and over again, say "Jigger the lessons!"

I used to get up every morning sighing and declaring that I would not stay, till I took hold of the books to get ready my French exercises, when somehow I used to get into a better frame of mind; for they seemed to cheer me up, and render the place a little less distasteful. I know very well now that my conduct afterwards was very sad, and that I can offer no defence; but when there is any scandal, and things that were untrue have been said, of course I feel bound to speak up; and, whether out of place or not, I mean to say here that, whether it was to tease me, or whether she meant it, all that Clara hinted was untrue.

I never once wrote Monsieur Achille's name upon the blotting paper, for I would not have been guilty of such bold, outrageous conduct; but the tiresome creature would persist in saying that I did, and, as a matter of course, it was of no use to try and stop her. But I could not help feeling how shocking it was, and how wrong for Monsieur Achille to take advantage of his position as a teacher to behave as he did. He must have been very badly taught himself; and yet it did seem so sweet when one was banished in this way from home, joined to him, as it were, by those before-mentioned chords of sympathy—to him, another exile from home; and it was such nonsense to say Mrs. Blunt's establishment embraced all the comforts of a home, when one never saw a single comfort: if it did, they must have been embraced so tightly that they were all smothered—it seemed so sweet to have one to take an interest in every word and look, as Monsieur Achille soon showed that he did. And we had no pets—neither bird nor dog; and what could I do but set to loving something?

I may be wrong, but it seems to me only natural that we should have something on which to bestow our love; and if that is taken away upon which one wishes to bestow it, why it must gush over upon some other object. Of course, I loved Clara; but, then, she loved something else, and one did not get a fair exchange for one's affection; and I wanted a great deal of devotion to comfort me then, and make up for what I was suffering. So

at last, giving way the least, little, tiniest morsel at a time, I began to feel that I should some day love Monsieur Achille very passionately; and—oh, how wicked!—I was first quite sure of it at church one Sunday, when that dreadful curate was preaching at the old vicar, and Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy were saying it over to themselves with their eyes shut, and one's heart was out in the green fields and woods and far away, and as wicked as a heart can be.

Oh, yes, wicked—wicked—wicked as could be—dreadfully wicked! But it was all mamma's fault. I had many a good cry about it, but I could not help it all; and it did seem such a relief, after walking two and two to church together, like little girls—it did seem such a relief to have some one in the building who did not look upon one as a child. For there *he* used to sit, Sunday after Sunday, behaving so hypocritically, for all the while he was a Roman Catholic; only he came to church to please Mrs. Blunt, though I sometimes fancy it was to please himself as well. But it was upon this one Sunday that I seemed to notice it so particularly. Just for want of something better to do, I suppose, I had been taking the greatest of pains with myself; and I must have looked nice, or else Clara would not have stood and clapped her hands when I was ready; and then we went off, and no sooner were we well outside the great iron gates than there just before us we could see Monsieur Achille and the Signor, arm in arm, going towards the church, and having evidently just before been taking a walk in the bright, free, green fields from which I was prisoned. I saw them look very hard towards us when they turned round, and Clara whispered that she knew why they had come, and where they were going; for previous to this, I suppose, they had very seldom been in the church—at least, we had never hardly seen them.

But it was plain enough where they were going, for they went in just before us; and as they stood in the porch waiting for the pew-opener, the Signor commenced crossing himself just as if it were a Roman Catholic chapel; when I saw Monsieur Achille pinch his arm and whisper something, so that he dropped his hand to his side and looked quite horrified. Then I saw Monsieur Achille whisper to the pew-opener, when they disappeared within the great

swing, red-baize doors, and we went up stairs to fill the long pews in the gallery.

It was only natural that we should look round the church after being comfortably seated, when there, in one of the sideway seats, were the two masters, casting an eye up towards us every now and then, and looking so hard that I felt quite ashamed, and was afraid it would be observed; but I soon remembered that our three Graces were sitting in the pew behind, and I know they felt sure that the glances were directed at them. Poor things! And then it was that I had that thought come into my head, forcing its way in as if to make its abode there, although I shut my eyes tightly, and determined not to think of anything of the kind. People take opiates for pains bodily; but why, oh! why do not Savory and Moore, or Godfrey and Cooke, or somebody or another bring out an opiate for pains mental? What would I not have given that day to have lulled the excitement of my feelings, and to have attended quietly to my duties as I ought?

Tiresome, tiresome, tiresome!—oh, how tiresome it was, day after day, to go back to all the old school ways and habits—writing exercises, learning lessons, saying them, and being corrected and snubbed; heard to read, and one's emphasis here, there, and everywhere found fault with, when I'm sure I read far better than those who heard me. Then my writing was not in accordance with Mrs. Blunt's ideas of penmanship.

There were no novels to read; no *Times*, with its own mysterious advertisements, that seem to mean such a deal; no morning concerts, no walks or rides—only exercise, two and two, as walking advertisements of the Cedars. I declare at last, in spite of the French lessons—or perhaps partly owing to the whirl within me, and the dreadfully worried state I was in—I grew quite low-spirited, and could not eat, and used to sit and mope, and I could see that I was getting paler and paler every day.

This sort of thing, though, would not do for Mrs. Blunt, who saw in it the probable loss of a pupil and plenty of pounds a year; and one morning there was a summons for me to go into the drawing-room, where I found Mrs. Blunt and a gentleman in black—so prim, so white-handkerchiefed and gold-sealed! All his grey hair was brushed up into a point, like an ice mountain on the

top of his head; while, whenever he spoke, his words came rolling out like great sugar-coated pills—so soft, so sweet, so smooth, you might have taken him for a great mechanical bon-bon box, and the hand he gently waved for the spring that set him in motion. I knew well enough that he was a doctor, as soon as I went in, and that he had been sent for to see me.

"Miss Bozerne, Dr. Boole," said Mrs. Blunt.

And then, after ever so much bowing and saluting, there was the horrid old wretch, screwing his face up, and wagging his head, and peeping at me out of his half-shut eyes, as he felt my pulse and told me to put out my tongue; while directly after he drew in a long breath and pinched his lips together, as if he knew all about my complaint, and could see through it in a moment. But he did not know that I was mentally delivering him a homily upon hypocrisy, of which dreadful stuff it seemed to me there was an abundance at Allsham, it being about the place like an epidemic—or I suppose I ought to say it was in the place like an epidemic. And I must confess I had caught the complaint very badly, though Dr. Boole was no use for that, seeing that he could not cure himself. Oh! if everybody troubled with hypocrisy would only call in the doctor, what a fortune each medical man would soon make!

Well, the doctor left hold of my wrist, after putting it down gently, as if it were something breakable, and put his gold eye-glasses up for another inspection.

"Was not my appetite rather failing? Did I not feel a strong inclination to sigh? Did I not feel low-spirited, and wake of a morning unrefreshed?"

Why, of course I did. And so would any one who had been treated as I had, and so I felt disposed to tell him; but it would have been of little use. So I let them say and think what they liked; and when the interview was over, the doctor rose and rolled out of the room, bowing in a way that must have delighted Mrs. Blunt's ideas of deportment; while he had written something upon a half-sheet of note paper, and left orders that the prescription should be immediately made up.

"Of course," said Mrs. Blunt, "I shall write to your dear mamma by the next post, Miss Bozerne; but she need be under no concern, for the cares of a home will be

bestowed upon you. And now you had better return to the pursuance of your course of studies."

I took the extremely polite hint; but I did not take the medicine when it was sent in. What did I want with medicine? Why, it was absurd. I used to pour it out into the glass, and then take it to the open window and throw it as far out as I could, so as to make a shower of fine physic fall upon the grass and pathway—such small drops that no one could see it had been thrown out. And, after all, I'm sure it was only a little bitter water, coloured and scented, and labelled to look important.

At the doctor's next visit I was horribly afraid that he would ask me whether I had taken the medicine; and sure enough he did, only Mrs. Blunt directly said "Yes," and he was satisfied, and said I was much better, though he did not quite like my flushed, feverish-looking face. So he wrote another prescription for that, when I was only colouring up on account of being asked about the medicine.

TEAR THE NINTH.

THREE-CORNERED.

DR. BOOLE had pronounced me to be decidedly better, and had been and gone for the last time, while I felt quite sorry as I thought of the expense, and of how it would figure in the account along with the books and extras. The doctor had rubbed his hands and smiled, and congratulated me upon my improved looks and rapid return to health. And really I did feel decidedly better, though it was not his doing; and if any prescription at all had done me good, it was a tiny one written in French. And now, somehow, I did seem to find the Cedars a little more bearable, and my spirits were brighter and better; but not one drop of the odious medicine had I taken.

Clara had more than once seen me throw it away, and had said "Oh!" and "My!" and "What a shame!" but I had thrown it away all the same, except twice or three times when I got Patty Smith to take it for me, which she did willingly, upon my promising to do her exercises; and I really believe she would have taken quarts of the odious stuff on the same conditions, for she could eat and drink almost anything, and I believe that she was all digestive apparatus instead of brains. Pasty wasters, fat, sour

gooseberries, vinegar pippins, it was all the same to her; and she used to be always having great dry seed cakes sent to her from home, to sit voraciously devouring at night when we went to bed; and then out of generosity, when I had helped her with her exercises—which I often did as I grew more contented—she would cut me off wedges of the nasty, branny stuff with her scissors, which was a lucky thing for the sparrows, who used to feast upon seed cake crumbs from morning to night, for I never ate any.

And now I began to pay more attention to the lessons: singing with the Signor or the Fraulein, who had one of the most croaky voices I ever heard, though she was certainly a most brilliant pianiste. Her name was Gretchen, but we used to call her Clarionette, for that seemed to suit best with her horrid, reedy, croaky voice. Then, too, I used to practise hard with my instrumental music; but such a jangly piano we had for practice, though there was a splendid Collard in the drawing-room that it was quite a treat to touch. But only fancy working up Brinley Richards, or Vincent Wallace, or Czerny upon a horrible skeleton-keyed piano that would rattle like old bones, while it was always out of tune, had a dumb note somewhere, and was not even of full compass. Then I tried hard to take to the dancing, and poor little Monsieur de Kittville—droll little man!—who always seemed to have two more arms than belonged to him; and there they were, tight in his coat sleeves, and hung out, one on each side, as if he did not know where to put them; and he a master of deportment!

I had quite taken a turn now, and was trying to bear it all, and put up with everything as well as I could, even with the horribly regular meals which we used to sit down to at a table where all the knives and forks were cripples—some loose in their handles, some were cracked, some were bent, and others looking over their shoulders. One horrid thing came out one day, and peppered my dinner with rosin dust; and there it was—a fork—sticking upright in a piece of tough stewed steak, although two of the prongs were bent; and when some of the girls tittered, Miss Furness said that I ought to have known better, and that such behaviour was most unladylike and unbecoming.

But there, she was naturally an unpleasant,

crabby old thing, and never hardly opened her lips to speak without saying words that were all crooked and full of corners. She once told Celia Blang—the pupil she petted, and who used to tell her tales—that she used to be considered very handsome, and was called the “flower of the village;” but if she was, they must have meant the flower of the vinegar plant—for it is impossible to conceive a more acid old creature. In church, too, it was enough to make one turn round and slap her; for if she did not copy from the vicar, and take to repeating the responses out so terribly loud, and before the officiating priest, so as to make believe how devout she was, when it really seemed to me that it was only to make herself conspicuous. And then, to see the way in which the vain old thing used to dress her thin, straggly hair! I do not laugh at people because their hair is not luxuriant or is turning grey, but at their vanity, which I am sure deserves it; and anybody is welcome to laugh at mine. As for Miss Furness’s hair, there was a bit of false here and another bit there, and so different in shade and texture to her own that it was quite shocking to see how artificial she looked; while, to make matters ten times worse, she could not wear her hair plain, but in that old-fashioned Eugenie style, stretching the skin of her face out so tightly that her red nose shone, and she was continually on the grin. And yet I’ve caught her standing before the glass in the drawing-room, to simper and smile at herself, as if she were a goddess of beauty.

As of course you know, South Sea Island gum mops had gone out then, and chignons were just in vogue; when, of course, she must be in the fashion, and the Eugenie style was dismissed to make way for a great pad; when, very soon, her light silk dress was all over pomatumy marks between the shoulders, though she rubbed it well with bread crumbs every night. I was so annoyed that I threw mine off in disgust; for who could wear a chignon, and be imitated by such a creature? I curled my hair all round, and next day wore it hanging in ringlets; and this was the day upon which I received the prescription written in French, which did me so much good. It was French lesson day, and while my exercise was being corrected and I was trying to translate, I felt something pressed into my hand; and somehow or another—though I knew how

horribly wicked it was—I had not the heart to refuse it, but blushed, and trembled, and stood there with my face suffused, blundering through the translation, until the lesson was ended, and, without daring to look at the giver, I could rush upstairs and devour those two or three lines hastily scribbled upon a piece of exercise paper.

No! never, never, never will I divulge what they were! Enough that I say how they made my cheeks burn, my heart throb, and the whole place turn into an abode of bliss. Why, I could have kissed Mrs. Blunt and all the teachers that evening; and when, at tea time, as I sat thoughtful and almost happy—I think that I was quite happy for a little while—Miss Furness said something spiteful and cross, I really don't think I minded it a bit.

It did not last long, that very bright colour medium; but there was something of it henceforth to make lessons easy, and the time to pass less dolefully. I did not answer the first note, nor the second, nor yet the third; but I suppose he must have seen that I was not displeased, or he would not have written so many times; but at last I did dare to give him a look, which brought note after note for me to devour again and again in solitude. I quite tremble now I write, when I think of the daring I displayed in receiving them; but I was brave then, and exultant over my conquest in holding for slave that noble-looking French refugee, whose private history must, I felt, be such a romance, that I quite felt to grow taller with importance.

Every note I received was written in his own sweet, sparkling, champagne-like language; and, oh! what progress I made in the tongue, though I am afraid I did not deserve all the praise he bestowed upon me.

Times and times he used to pray for an interview, that I would meet him somewhere—anywhere; but of course I could not yield to any such request, but told him to be content with the replies I gave him to his notes. But still, plan after plan he would propose, and all of them so dreadfully imprudent, and wild, and chivalrous, that nothing could be like it. I know that he would have been a knight or a cavalier had he lived earlier; while as to his looks!—ah, me! I fear that there must be truth in mesmerism, for I felt from the first that he had some terrible power over me, and could—

what shall I say?—there, I cannot think of a better simile—turn me, as it were, round his finger; and that is really not an elegant expression. But there, he was so calm, so pensive-looking, and noble, that he might have been taken for one of Byron's heroes—Lara, or Manfred, or the Giaour. Either or all of these must have been exactly like him; while to find out that I, Laura Bozerne, was the sole object of his worship—ah! it was thrilling.

I do not know how the time went then, for to me there seemed to be only one measurement, and that was the space between Monsieur Achille's lessons. As to the scoldings that I was constantly receiving, I did not heed them now in the least; for my being was filled by one sole thought, while the shadowy, reproachful face of Mr. St. Purre grew more faint day by day. It must have been weeks—I cannot tell; months, perhaps—after my entrance as pupil at the Cedars that I retired on some excuse one afternoon to my dormitory, with a little, sharp, three-cornered note, and tremblingly anxious I tore it open, and read its contents.

And those contents? I would not even hint at them, if it were not that they are so necessary to the progress of my confessions.

He said that he had implored me again and again to meet him, and yet I was relentless and cruel; and now he had come to the determination to wait night by night under the great elm trees by the side wall, when, even if I would not meet him, he would still have the satisfaction of stilling his beatings of his aching heart by folding his arms about it, leaning against some solitary, rugged trunk, and gazing upon the casket which contained his treasure. I might join him, or I might leave him to his bitter solitude; but there he would be, night after night, as a guardian to watch over my safety.

It was a beautiful note, and no amount of translating could do it justice; for after the glowing French in which it was written, our language seems cold and blank.

What could I do? I could not go, and yet it was impossible to resist the appeal. How could I rest upon my pillow, knowing him to be alone in the garden watching, with weary, waiting eyes, for my coming?—for him to be there hour after hour, till the cold dawn was breaking, and then to turn away,



with Tennyson, slightly altered, upon his lips—

"She cometh not, he said."

It was too much! I fought as I had fought before, over and over again, thinking of how it would be wicked, wrong, imprudent, unmaidenly. Oh, what dozens of adjectives I did slap my poor face with that afternoon, vowing again and again that I would not heed his note. But it was unbearable; and at last, with flushed cheeks and throbbing pulses, I plunged the note beneath the front of my dress, exclaiming—
"Come what may, I will be there!"

